

## Interview with James Marvin Montgomery

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JAMES MARVIN MONTGOMERY

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Q: This is an interview with James Marvin Montgomery, a retired Foreign Service officer. It's being done for the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program. Jim, would you start this interview, as we usually do, with something about when and where you were born, where you went to school and the early period of your life, and how you got interested in the Foreign Service?

MONTGOMERY: I was born on September 27, 1935, in South Jersey. I grew up in Burlington, New Jersey, went to elementary and high school there, and then moved on to Juniata College, in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, from which I graduated in 1957. I majored in history there and obtained a graduate fellowship at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. One day just before graduation I was walking through the administrative section of Juniata College and saw a notice on the bulletin board inviting applications to take the Foreign Service examination. I thought, "It's free, I might as well." So I signed up and...

Q: *This exam was conducted in Atlanta?*

MONTGOMERY: No, I was still studying at Juniata College at that time. I planned to go to Atlanta in September, 1957. I sent off the requisite application and received in the mail a

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ticket of admission to the exam, which was given at Pennsylvania State University, in State College, Pennsylvania.

So I went up to Penn State and sat there with a bunch of other aspiring diplomats. A State Department type came in, in his Brooks Brothers suit, opened up a box, took out the exams - and they were the wrong exams! [Laughter] So I figured, an outfit like this couldn't be all bad! I went back to Juniata, the State Department sent me another ticket of admission, and I went to a university in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, this time, where they were giving the make-up exam. I took the exam. You needed a 70 to pass. I got a 70. There was no wasted effort there. So I filled out all of the papers...

*Q: Was this the one-day exam?*

MONTGOMERY: It was a one-day exam.

*Q: Did you also have a foreign language exam?*

MONTGOMERY: No, there was no language exam. Then I continued with my plans to go to Graduate School at Emory University. In the summer of 1957 I went down to Williamsburg, Virginia, where I had the role of narrator in the pageant called, "The Common Glory," that they put on every summer there. While I was down there, I got a phone call from the State Department, asking me to take the oral examination.

*Q: How did they follow you up?*

MONTGOMERY: They called my home in New Jersey, and my mother told them where I was.

So I went up to DC and reported to that building at the corner of 19th St. and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. I was met, as I recall it, by three or four elderly Foreign Service Officers - or they seemed old at the time.

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We sat down and talked for about an hour and a half, and they asked me some questions. When they found out that my Dad was a local politician in his spare time, we spent a lot of time talking about that, which I could talk about because I knew a lot about it. Then they found out that I earned my spending money while I was in college by preaching every Sunday in a black Baptist church. They were utterly fascinated about that, so we spent a lot of time talking about that. Then they told me to go outside, sit down, and wait for a bit.

I sat there for about 15 minutes. One of them came out and said, "Congratulations! You've been accepted into the Foreign Service. When can you begin?" I said that I had an appointment at Emory as a graduate assistant, starting in a month or so. I asked whether it would be possible to do that year at Emory and then come into the State Department in the summer of 1958. They said, "That will be fine."

*Q: Were you the only person going through the oral exam?*

MONTGOMERY: There wasn't anybody else in sight. I assume that they had other people scheduled to take the exam. But that was the custom - they told you right away whether you had passed the oral exam.

*Q: Do you remember the names of any of the examiners?*

MONTGOMERY: I do not. So I finished out my summer as narrator in Williamsburg and then went on to one year in graduate school at Emory University, obviously weighing the two alternatives: a career in academia or a career in the Foreign Service. It was quite an enviable position for me. However, I ultimately decided that academia was all right, but, as I told my parents, rather than write about history, I would go off and see if I could make a little history. So I decided that, when I got the call, I would enter the Foreign Service. I finished my course work at Emory for my M. A., did some teaching while I was there, and then went back to work for the water well driller for whom I had previously worked in the summer. One day, I was plugging away on a well. The boss drove up and told me that he

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had received a phone call from the State Department. They needed me right away. So I put down my wrench and headed for Washington.

*Q: You had struck oil.*

MONTGOMERY: I had struck oil. So, in July, 1958, I raised my right arm and was sworn in. I think that I was one of the youngest Foreign Service Officers.

*Q: How old were you then?*

MONTGOMERY: I was 22.

*Q: What was your first assignment in the Department?*

MONTGOMERY: Well, my first assignment in the Department was the A-100 Course at the Foreign Service Institute, which I attended. Then I was sent to study a world language for four months. Since I had studied Spanish in school, I chose Spanish and I came out of this course speaking it fairly well. The Spanish language program was, in many ways, much more effective than the Vietnamese language program that you and I went through in 1959-1960. So I came out speaking pretty good Spanish, and then they assigned me to Personnel, where I dealt with the assignment of people to Germany. [Laughter]

*Q: Well, that figures!*

MONTGOMERY: My great disappointment was that we were not going to go overseas right away. Everybody in the FSI class was assigned to Washington. All my classmates were sort of spread around the Department. I went off to the Personnel Operations Division and was put in charge of handling all of the paper work and the negotiations...

*Q: Did you ever serve with any of the people in your A-100 course later on in the Foreign Service?*

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MONTGOMERY: That's an interesting question. Yes, I later worked for Bill Dyass, who was then a Deputy Assistant of State for Public Affairs. I was then [February, 1977, to May, 1978] the Director of the Office of Public Programs. That's about the only one that I can think of. I obviously ran into them all the time but I really can't think of any other time where I was in the same post with anybody from my FSI class.

Q: You mentioned your experience in the A-100 course at the FSI. I have been astonished to learn, from a number of these interviews, of the number of Foreign Service Officers who came into the Foreign Service and did NOT go to the FSI and did NOT take the A-100 course. I can't imagine why.

MONTGOMERY: Where did they go?

Q: They were assigned directly to a job - usually in the State Department. Some of them were assigned directly overseas. This is a curious point which I mention in passing, but it does happen.

MONTGOMERY: Well, anyway...

Q: *You were in German personnel until when?*

MONTGOMERY: Until about August, 1959.

Q: *I have a note here that you went into Vietnamese language training. What interested you in Vietnamese?*

MONTGOMERY: Getting out of German personnel. It was pretty dull. It wasn't very challenging, though it was sort of fun for a while. I had one rather instructive incident which served me very well throughout my career.

It happened when we found out about a guy who had been in the Embassy in Bonn - one of those Foreign Service Staff people who spent almost all of his career in Germany. He

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was there before World War II, came back after the war, and retired. The Department apparently lost his papers, and he wasn't getting his pension checks. He was in really sad shape. We found out about it, and I pulled his file. All of the documentation was there which we needed.

I was working for Jim Moffat at the time. Jim very wisely said to me, "Jim, why don't you see if you can get a check to that guy by the end of the day?" I said, "How do I do that?" He said, "You 'walk' it through. You take the file to every person on the list and you don't leave until they take care of it." I said, "Okay, I'll give it a try." And I did it. I walked it through - I don't know how many places.

*Q: Did it take you all day?*

MONTGOMERY: It took me all day, but by 4:00 PM I washed up at the window with the bars on it at the Treasury Department Annex across the street from the White House. I handed in the vouchers, and this wizened old guy looked at me and said, "You want a check, huh?" I said, "Yes, please." He said, "Huh! Okay. Where are you from?" I said, "I'm from the State Department." He said, "I thought so." [Laughter] So he went off, and 10 minutes later I had a check. We put it in the mail that night.

As I say, this experience was extremely instructive. It showed what you could do if you're willing to spend the time and the effort. Obviously, you couldn't do this all the time, but it could be done. I tucked that away. It was useful in the future.

*Q: When you retired, did you have any trouble at all with your pension check?*

MONTGOMERY: None whatsoever.

Q: Same with me. It worked like clockwork. I've heard horror stories, but they didn't happen to me or you, and they probably don't happen to most people. But it does happen

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to some, and it's a cautionary tale. So, regarding the Vietnamese training, did you see a notice of some kind?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, as I was in Personnel and in the cockpit, so to speak, of assignments, I got advanced word that they were looking for people for Southeast Asian language training. So I volunteered for Thai language training.

*Q: Why Thai?*

MONTGOMERY: Well, because it wasn't German Personnel. [Laughter]

*Q: You weren't too familiar with the other countries of Southeast Asia?*

MONTGOMERY: No, it sounded as if it would be interesting to learn a strange language like that. Go to Thailand? I thought that that sounded pretty interesting. I thought, Thailand has this King who plays the saxophone. It has to be pretty neat.

After I applied for Thai, they called me up and said, "The Thai language class is filled. How about Vietnamese?" I'd just read an article about the Cao Dai religious sect in South Vietnam. It sounded pretty interesting, so I said, "Sign me up." That's how I ended up in Vietnamese language training, which I began in September, 1959. This is when you, John Helble, and I met, under the aegis of Dinh van Ban, God rest his soul.

We began to struggle our way through learning the Vietnamese language. As you recall, the language study materials were really not developed. It was a hit and miss operation. We certainly learned something and were much better equipped at the end of the course than we were at the beginning. Of course, when we arrived in the Embassy in Saigon, we were faced with great scepticism on the part of some of the people there who felt that Vietnamese was a silly language to learn and that French was really all that you needed. The only people that counted in Vietnam, of course, spoke French.

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Well, I didn't speak French, so I was required by circumstances to push harder on my Vietnamese. I ran into a lot of Vietnamese who were pretty interesting and who gave me a picture of what was going on. They did not speak French. It was particularly true in the Vietnamese labor movement and out in the countryside.

Anyway, you will recall that, when we finished Vietnamese training, all three of us were assigned to Saigon. During my first two years in the Foreign Service, I had been married to a young lady from North Dakota, a French teacher. Off we went to Vietnam, via Copenhagen, Paris, Rome, and Saigon.

*Q: Did you know in advance of your assignment to Saigon? Were there any other places beside Saigon where you could have been assigned?*

MONTGOMERY: I suppose that there was the Consulate in Hue, but, you know, I just didn't think of it.

So we arrived in Saigon in the dead of night and were whisked off to the house at 6-A Rue Thevenet, or Duong Tu Xuong in Vietnamese. It was interesting to have an address with both a French and Vietnamese name.

Much to my surprise, I started in the Economic Section, instead of the Political Section. The Economic Section, at that time, was not in the Embassy proper. It was in the USOM [United States Operations Mission] building, the name at the time for the AID [Agency for International Development] Mission. It was next to the Xa Loi Pagoda, of subsequent fame when the Buddhists rose up against the government of President Diem in 1963. I had a non air-conditioned office. I was assigned to follow the government's various programs in the countryside, including land reform, the agricultural credit program, and what have you. I found it ultimately quite fascinating. It gave me a good picture of how well the government wasn't doing and how it was losing, if it ever had it, any base of support in the countryside. And how the Viet Cong [the communists] were able to organize the people in the country.



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I remember picking up off the street in December, 1961, the first leaflets announcing the formation of the National Liberation Front, the NLF. They were in Vietnamese. I was one of the few people in the Embassy who could read them. Nobody seemed to pay very much attention to the NLF at the time. One of my great regrets is that I didn't save one of those leaflets.

*Q: I prepared a report on it, but it was based on an FBIS, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, intercept.*

MONTGOMERY: Yes. Looking back over the two years that we spent in Saigon - our first child was born there. She is now the mother of twins, living here in Bethesda, Maryland. This was the closest I ever came to leaving the Foreign Service because, after Laura was born, my wife, Dee Dee, developed an infection in her breast, which was enormously painful and didn't seem to go away. I was really ready to pack it in. Then the infection cleared up, and that crisis passed.

Q: The organization of the Embassy was kind of interesting because, as you said, the Economic Section office was co-located with the U.S. Operations Mission, and the Director of USOM was also the Economic Counselor, Arthur Gardiner. What did you think of this as an organizational tool?

MONTGOMERY: Well, in looking back on it and thinking about it, as opposed to what I thought of it at the time, it was clear that one of the functions of the Economic Section was to be a cheerleader for the assistance programs. You really were not expected to come up with scathing criticism of economic developments that had a high, USOM quotient in them. As you recall, this was entirely consistent with the positive thinking approach - and I remember that phrase - that Washington could only handle a limited amount of bad news. We really weren't going to tell them about difficult things that were developing. Somebody pointed out that the Ambassador [Elbridge Durbrow] lived in a house that was at one time

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the home of Dr. Coue, the Frenchman who was the proponent of positive thinking - even before Norman Vincent Peale.

I remember that aspect of things very well, that "We don't want to hear that things are not going well." I remember positive thinking, cheerleading sessions led by the Ambassador. Well, my view was that you first had to conclude that anybody was better than President Ngo dinh Diem, because that was what we were going to get. I always felt that we were intellectually dishonest in even deciding that Diem was the only figure that we could work with. In that case, you don't hide the negative aspects and the fact that he had very real limitations. We went through a lot of bullshit in our reporting, and stuff like that. I think it was a mistake.

*Q: To go a little further in this direction, do you think that wshould have avoided becoming as deeply involved in 1960-1962, as we did?*

MONTGOMERY: Not at the time. I thought that we were doing the right thing and were stopping the communists. I thought that this was a worthwhile thing to do. We had seen what happened when the communists took over Eastern Europe. That was pretty bad. The Hungarian uprising [of 1956] was very vivid in my mind. It was very clear that the North Korean communists were not very nice people, and the people who lived under that regime were in a pretty poor position. At that time I felt that we should give the people of South Vietnam every chance to survive and thrive on their own. The idea that, somehow, we had cheated Ho Chi Minh [the communist leader of North Vietnam] out of national elections in 1956 struck me as pretty silly. I just felt that, as part of this view, we had to have a very clear understanding of what was happening in South Vietnam.

To jump ahead a little bit, I remember most vividly that when the decision was made to make a major deployment of U.S. troops to South Vietnam in 1965...

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*Q: We had greatly expanded our military personnel in South Vietnam in the fall of 1961, from 800 or so to 15,000-16,000.*

MONTGOMERY: No, I'm talking about when we put in formal units of the U.S. armed forces. My attitude at that time was, "This is the right thing to do, but it's going to be very, very difficult. Much more difficult than the top levels of the U.S. Government realize."

I would say that people like you and me, Jim Rosenthal, and other people who had been down a little bit at the lower levels of the Vietnamese people and were dealing with the realities of their political aspirations, had a much clearer idea of just how horrendously difficult it was going to be - while still believing that it should be done. I remember reading the book, "The Ugly American," by Burdick and Lederer, when I was in the A-100 course at the FSI. I took it on board. I thought that this was the way we were supposed to behave, that we could whip these bastards.

So, looking back on it, did I nudge history when I was in Vietnam? Probably not. Do I have anything to contribute to the historical record that's not already in the record because of my time there? I don't think so. I think that the only thing that adds just a touch to the record is the idea that there were at least some of us who recognized the difficulty.

I think that that's about that. There were so many people involved in Vietnam, eventually. So much has been written about it. I don't know about you, but among the other people you've interviewed there were probably some people who were in Vietnam.

*Q: Not to any great extent. Actually, only a very small part of the Foreign Service ever served in Vietnam.*

MONTGOMERY: Well, I did not keep notes of my time in Saigon. I chronicled the progress of the land reform program and the legal provisions to control land rents in favor of the tenant farmers under Vietnamese Government Ordinance 57, and the arrangements

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for the National Agricultural Cooperative Organization. All of these were largely failures, particularly in political terms.

*Q: So you left Saigon in July, 1962. Where did you go then?*

MONTGOMERY: I came back to the State Department to work on the Vietnam desk.

*Q: Did you have any choice on this matter, or were you simply assigned?*

MONTGOMERY: I was simply assigned. I didn't even think that there was going to be any choice in the matter. The idea that I could finagle an assignment in the Foreign Service hadn't yet crossed my mind. [Laughter]

*Q: First of all, how many people were on the Vietnam desk, who were they, and what were you doing?*

MONTGOMERY: Well, I think that Ben Wood was in charge - Chalmers B. Wood. We worked for Barney Koren [Henry L. T. Koren], who was the Director of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs. The Vietnam experience or enterprise was still subordinate to an Office Director. This was in the middle of 1962, after the mission to Vietnam led by Eugene Staley, which dealt with the counterinsurgency evaluation that led to an increase in advisers. Still, the Vietnam desk came under the Office Director of Southeast Asian Affairs, in what was then called the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs. When did you come on the desk?

*Q: A year later, in August, 1963.*

MONTGOMERY: By then Paul Kattenburg was there, a special fellow in his own right. I think that there were, perhaps, four or five officers on the desk.

*Q: What did you think of Paul Kattenburg?*

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MONTGOMERY: [Laughter] What did I think of Paul Kattenburg? He was one of the most interesting people that I ever met. I thought that he was totally unsuited as a bureaucratic operative. There was just too much pressure on him, and he came out with a skin condition which was clearly related to his nerves.

Q: You and I were on the desk, and so was Lyall Breckon, another good friend of ours.

MONTGOMERY: He came about the same time that you did. Then the desk became the Vietnam Working Group. Later, it went off as a separate office in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs.

Q: *Who was the Assistant Secretary during your time on the Vietnadesk?*

MONTGOMERY: When I first arrived there in September, 1962, the Assistant Secretary was so bloody remote that I'm not even sure that I remember who it was.

Q: *I think that it was Averell Harriman.*

MONTGOMERY: I think that you're absolutely right.

Q: But he was on in years. He was replaced some time early in 1963, I think, by Roger Hilsman, who had been the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence Research.

MONTGOMERY: I don't even remember the Deputy Assistant Secretaries in the bureau, except Bob Barnett.

Q: Bob Barnett was one of them. I remember that during the summer of 1963 we had two college interns whose names I can't remember. One was a woman, the other was a young man. They were very, very good.

MONTGOMERY: The woman was Janice Church. During a later assignment I used to make speeches for her. The last time I saw her, she was in the civil service in the Office of

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Personnel Management. She ran courses on how the government works. When I was in the Bureau of Congressional Relations, I would speak at courses that she arranged.

Q: She used to handle a lot of the correspondence on the Vietnam desk. I had deep doubts about interns, but in my view they turned out to be very capable.

MONTGOMERY: I always had positive experiences with summer interns, throughout the years.

Q: So you were there on the Vietnam desk. What were some of the principal points? You came on the desk in September, 1962. 1963 was one of the great watersheds. What was the principal question then?

MONTGOMERY: In 1963 the principal point was the Buddhist uprising and the runup to the overthrow and death of Ngo dinh Diem. Diem was murdered just before the assassination of President Kennedy. It all sort of blurs in the mind when I look back. You often wonder if there wasn't a connection between the two events. So much has been written about it.

It was just a matter of increasing involvement in Vietnam, increasing frustration with the actions of the Vietnamese Government. Frederick E. ("Fritz") Nolting was Ambassador. In fact, he arrived in Saigon as Ambassador in May, 1961, well before we left there. I'm not sure that I can add a lot. I have one little anecdote during my time in Saigon. Some historian can look it up some day because I think that the paper trail is there, if you know where to look for it.

This happened after the coup d'etat in 1963 which overthrew Diem. I think that Nguyen Cao Ky was high up in the Vietnamese Government. There were charges of corruption, possibly involving him. I remember that we were working in the Operations Center on the Seventh Floor of the Department. It was called the Vietnam Working Group.

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One day I received a NODIS telegram to handle. This was a distribution control which meant that there should be No Distribution Outside the Department of State. The issue was that the Vietnamese Government had decided to replace the 200 piaster note. Apparently, this was the note of choice for black marketeers. It was the largest denomination note. They were going to replace it, wash out a lot of ill-gotten gains, and all of that kind of thing. They wanted to do it secretly. They had, I believe, contracted with Thomas Cook in London, which printed banknotes in those days.

I know that it wasn't the American Banknote Company. It was in London. The issue was to get a U.S. Air Force plane laid on to bring the banknotes to Saigon and keep it all very secret, so that the bad guys would be surprised. I forget the value of the banknotes involved, but let's say that it was 3.0 billion piastres worth of 200 piaster notes.

So I arranged for the U.S. Air Force plane to pick up the new 200 piaster notes in London, and they were delivered in Saigon. That was sort of the last I heard of it for about a month. Then, an UNCLASSIFIED Economic WEEKA - do you remember the Weekly Economic Airgram? - came across my desk. It said, perhaps in Item No. 24, that there had been confusion in the exchange of the new 200 piaster notes, which occurred on such and such a date - and it was the right date. The item said that they were surprised at the number of old 200 piaster notes in circulation, because they only had 2.0 billion worth of new 200 piaster notes!

*Q: So 1.0 billion piastres had disappeared.*

MONTGOMERY: A billion piastres had disappeared. I drew this to the attention of a variety of people, but no one was really interested. [Laughter]

*Q: The Australians say, "File that in the 'Too Hard' File."*

MONTGOMERY: The "Too Hard to Do" file. You hear about corruption and all that sort of thing, which is very subtly done. But that was one of the most blatant operations I've ever

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heard of. You just get that UNCLASSIFIED Economic WEEKA and set it alongside that exchange of NODIS telegrams, and you can figure that one out.

I was on the desk at the time of the Tonkin Gulf crisis in August, 1964. Looking back on it, the Vietnam Working Group was located in the Operations Center when this happened. I spent a lot of time in the Operations Center. There has been a lot of material written about the Tonkin Gulf crisis, with the strong implication that it was all manipulated, and we all knew that it was not what it purported to be. That may have been the case but, certainly at my level, everyone I knew genuinely believed that there were two separate attacks on those U.S. destroyers. I knew about OPLAN 34-A but I didn't...

*Q: What was OPLAN 34-A?*

MONTGOMERY: OPLAN 34-A was a CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] run operation to harass North Vietnam, to slip guerrillas into North Vietnam, landing them from the sea or dropping them in by parachute. It apparently was not a very effective operation. I saw an account of it in the newspapers a few months ago in which some of the South Vietnamese who were captured by the North Vietnamese wanted their back pay. And the U.S. Government wasn't going to give it to them! [Laughter] The fact is that there was an OPLAN 34-A landing opposite where the U.S. destroyers were reportedly attacked.

In the Operations Center we didn't know that there was a CIA operation going on at the same time as the attacks on the U.S. destroyers - the USS C. TURNER JOY and the USS MADDOX - which were steaming off the coast. I don't know whether those two destroyers had some kind of support role in this operation or not. I don't think that they did. However, it certainly would have been a normal reaction for the North Vietnamese to conclude that they did. The second night of the crisis probably involved more confusion than a genuine attack, but it seemed like a genuine attack.

Historians tend to ignore the fact that confusion can explain a lot.



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*Q: I think that's very true, both in military as well as civiliaaffairs.*

MONTGOMERY: It happens in diplomatic matters, also. Diplomatic activity is rife with unintended consequences. That's just it, and people screw up. They screw up a lot more than you think is written down.

Q: You were talking about the Tonkin Gulf crisis in 1964. We glossed over quickly the overthrow of Ngo dinh Diem. As I recall, you spent the night of November 1-2 at the Operations Center. I relieved you early in the morning of November 2, 1963. Would you go over that? I thought it was an interesting story.

MONTGOMERY: It's interesting to go back and read some of the detailed descriptions of what happened. Richard Reeve's book, "Kennedy," is particularly well done on that score. I think that you and I were indeed involved in that telegram which went out with improper clearances and which is said to have given the green light for the overthrow of Diem. I was also up until 3:00 AM one morning with Bob Barnett, writing the instructions that stopped the Commercial Import Program in South Vietnam, which occurred maybe a week before Ngo dinh Diem was overthrown.

*Q: The Commercial Import Program in South Vietnam was the principaelement of U.S. support for the Saigon Government.*

MONTGOMERY: It was the principal element of U.S. support. It generated the counterpart currency which made the whole thing go. We cut off the program and, obviously, the plotters of the coup d'etat against Diem knew that. It could well have been what drove them to stumble into action against Diem. I thought that it was clear that Henry Cabot Lodge was sent out in August, 1963 as Ambassador to Vietnam to "get rid of Diem." The decision had been made, at least as I saw it, that nobody could have any illusions that Diem and his family were going to start behaving any differently. We'd known them for too long and too well. This was after the Ap Bac incident.

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Q: That was an attack by the communists on a hamlet near the Mekong River, south of Saigon, early in 1963. The communists stood and fought, instead of withdrawing.

MONTGOMERY: And they shot down some helicopters. It was enormously dramatic and had tremendous political impact. In looking back at this, I probably thought at the time that it was time for Diem to go. Things had gotten to the point where my view at the time was, "We have to win the war." We had to beat the communists and we weren't going to do it with Ngo dinh Diem.

*Q: This was clearly Paul Kattenburg's view.*

MONTGOMERY: It was obviously the view of Roger Hilsman, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. Whether it was also the view of Joe Mendenhall [former Political Counselor in Saigon and a Regional Policy Planner in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs in November, 1963], I don't know. I had no particular insight into the situation. A couple of minutes ago, in this interview, I was crisper than I meant to be. I think that a better explanation is that they [certain U.S. leaders] wanted Diem overthrown, but they wanted no responsibility for doing it. They wanted it both ways.

Q: This raises a point because there's been a lot of public controversy about this. Did the U.S. actually engage in operations to overthrow Diem?

MONTGOMERY: I would say that what makes it hard to say "No" is the cutting off of the Commercial Import Program. I mean, that could have had no other objective, AT THAT TIME. Cutting off this program two years earlier could have been designed to pressure Diem to do something differently. But cutting off that program at that time, after the six-month long Buddhist revolt and everything else, could only have been designed to create the necessary conditions.

Q: As I recall it, you were in the Operations Center through the night of November 1-2, 1963. You left at about 4:00 or 5:00 AM, when I relieved you. As I recall it, you had the

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task of informing the White House of the overthrow of Diem. Could you tell us a little more about this?

MONTGOMERY: I don't remember it.

Q: Well, I'll tell you what you did, because you told me about it when I relieved you early on the morning of November 2, 1963. You passed the word to President Kennedy - whether you spoke to him directly or not, I don't know. Diem had died. The word you got back was that President Kennedy was very disturbed to learn this, because the initial story was that the Ngo brothers, Ngo dinh Diem and Ngo dinh Nhu, committed suicide. This disturbed Kennedy very much because he saw himself as responsible for driving them to commit suicide.

MONTGOMERY: I think that Kennedy probably was genuinely disturbed. don't think that he wanted it to end up this way.

Q: Well, I think that in Ted Sorenson's book on Kennedy, he mentions a conversation with Kennedy between November 2, 1963, and Kennedy's own assassination on November 22, 1963. If I remember correctly, Sorenson quotes Kennedy as saying, "I didn't pay enough attention, I didn't read enough, I didn't fully understand." I think that this is probably correct. There were people in the U.S. Government who honestly believed that the overthrow of Diem was going to help us achieve our objectives in Vietnam.

MONTGOMERY: Oh, yes. The objectives themselves had not yet begun to be questioned, to use the passive voice. Isn't it interesting, though, that I had a conversation with the President of the United States, but there you are.

Q: Well, I'm not sure that you actually talked to Kennedy. But you talked to somebody who then talked to the President and relayed his comments back to you. At least there was that.

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This takes us, then, essentially to the end of your time on the Vietnam desk, which happened in July, 1964. Your next assignment was to the Political Section of the Embassy in Mexico City. How did this assignment come up? When did you learn about it, and how did you decide on it?

MONTGOMERY: I still had the view, "I can do nothing about massignments."

*Q: You accepted whatever the Department told you to do.*

MONTGOMERY: I first heard that I was going to be Principal Officer at Colon, Panama. Then I was going to be in the Political Section in Santiago, Chile, but the Ambassador said that I was too young. Finally, I ended up assigned to the Political Section in Mexico City.

*Q: Obviously, you were up for assignment abroad, you spoke Spanish, and you were probably going to go somewhere in Latin America.*

MONTGOMERY: Somewhere in Latin America, which was fine with me. I was perfectly comfortable with that. I did not particularly choose Mexico City but I was not particularly upset about this assignment. I thought that it would be sort of interesting. So we packed the family up at the end of the summer of 1964.

*Q: You had two children?*

MONTGOMERY: We had two children at this point: our daughter, Laura, born in Saigon, and our son, Darrow, who was born in Washington, DC, when I was working on the Vietnam desk. So, we packed up - and off we went.

*Q: How did you go to Mexico City? Did you fly or did you drive?*

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MONTGOMERY: We drove down through the United States. We would need a car when we got there, and it was perfectly feasible to drive. So we drove to Mexico City. It was a huge city, even then.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador?*

MONTGOMERY: The Ambassador was Tony Freeman. He was a career Ambassador and was there during my whole tour in Mexico City.

*Q: How large an Embassy was it? How many Foreign Service Officers were assigned there - approximately? Was it as big as Saigon, for example?*

MONTGOMERY: Well, the Political Section had six officers.

*Q: Well, that's about the size of the Political Section in Saigon until about 1964 or so, when it grew much larger. So, a similar sized Embassy, and, of course, Mexico is a major partner of the United States in so many areas.*

MONTGOMERY: Yes. It had a big Economic Section and a huge Consular Section, needless to say. There were several constituent posts, including those along the border with the U.S. There also was a Consulate in Vera Cruz, in the State of Vera Cruz. In addition, San Luis Potosi, Tampico, Merida, down in the Yucatan Peninsula, and Monterrey had Consulates or Consulates General.

I guess that the main impression I had is that I had a tremendous decompression problem after four straight years working on Vietnam, first in Saigon and then in Washington. I was assigned to the Political Section in Mexico City. It was clear that Washington did not particularly care about Mexican politics - at all. It didn't care about how Mexico was put together or how it was run. Nobody in the U.S. Government in Washington really was very interested in Mexico - certainly not at the political level.

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*Q: A current problem is illegal immigration into the United States from Mexico. Was that a problem when you were there?*

MONTGOMERY: Obviously, it was occurring, but it was not regarded as a problem.

*Q: It was not seen to be a problem. So what did you do in the Political Section?*

MONTGOMERY: Well, I handled internal politics. I concentrated on the operations of the PRI, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, that is, the Institutional Revolutionary Party. That was, in many ways, like the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in that it was not so far Leftist. Certainly the PRI had a view similar to the Communist Party in the Soviet Union about who should hold power. Only the PRI could win elections - at least, national elections.

It was there that I discovered that there were two reasons to hold elections. One was to decide who was going to be in power. The other was to show who was in power. [Laughter] The PRI preferred the latter, of course.

We were there when Gustavo Diaz Ordaz assumed power as President in October, 1964. So, obviously, he was President for the whole time that I was there. The presidential term was six years, with no reelection. I was beginning to get a pretty good idea of how the system worked.

In the Political Section I worked for an officer named John Barber, who had been born and grew up in Mexico and spent most of his career there. He knew Mexican politics very well. John knew so much about Mexican politics that he was intellectually constipated. You couldn't tell him anything that he didn't think he already knew. He hardly produced anything in the way of reporting because he had known it for so long. He thought that everybody knew it. It was one of these curious phenomena of knowing too much so that he

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was no longer curious. He no longer thought that anybody could be interesting because he had known it for so long.

I became a close friend of the Ambassador's Special Assistant, named Ed Corr, who ended up subsequently as Ambassador to Bolivia, Peru, and El Salvador. There was another officer in the Ambassador's front office named Bob Allen. We formed a sort of breakfast club. We became acquainted with a group of Mexican "secretarios particulares," or private secretaries to the various Mexican cabinet ministers. Business breakfasts were very much the thing in Mexico, coming out of the revolution.

Q: How did they say "business breakfast" in Spanish?

MONTGOMERY: They just said "desayuno." In this context it meant, "business breakfast."

*Q: I suppose that no women were invited, at that time.*

MONTGOMERY: No. The way you could join one of these breakfasts was either to be invited or simply to show up at a breakfast. You would grab a big table and sit there, and people would just sort ocome up and join you.

*Q: Were there any women officers assigned to the Embassy during youtime there?*

MONTGOMERY: In the Consular Section, but not in the PoliticaSection, that I recall.

We began to learn an awful lot about how things worked in Mexico because these private secretaries were political practitioners, and they wanted to brag. They couldn't really brag too much to other officials inside the government. They found us, particularly when it was just one of them, to be safe people to brag to. They would tell us all kinds of things about what was going on and how things worked - actually worked - and how things got done. A private secretary to the Minister of Gobernacion, or the Interior, was really extremely informative.

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So I began to generate a stream of political reports that upset msuperiors in the Embassy.

*Q: Did you identify the source of your reports to the Department?*

MONTGOMERY: Of course. These reports were in classified telegrams and so forth. The problem was that my superiors felt that these private secretaries were too high- ranking for me to be hanging out with. But nobody else was hanging out with them, because John Barber felt that he knew everybody and everything. He felt that he didn't need to talk to them, because he knew what was going on. Wallie Steuart was the Political Counselor. He was a perfectly decent fellow but he didn't want to get into any trouble. It was no big deal, and I continued to do what I had been doing, but I had to be more careful about it.

I also worked with student leaders - some of whom were 60 years old at this time. That gave me insights into how the student movement works and so forth.

There was one interesting incident where one of the many Vietnapeace feelers came through Mexico City.

*Q: Could you describe how that happened, if you know?*

MONTGOMERY: Yes. It's been written up in some of the histories on the subject. I can't really remember all of the details. However, what I recall is that the Political Counselor very reluctantly called me into his office and showed me this piece of paper involving a Vietnam peace feeler, because I was the only one in the Embassy who knew where Vietnam was, so to speak. He didn't want to show this to me, because I was too low-ranking.

*Q: You were a Second Secretary?*

MONTGOMERY: Second Secretary at this stage, I guess. I was too low-ranking, but they had to show it to me. I helped to prepare a response, spell the names correctly, and



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make some suggestions as to how to proceed. A telegram came back from Washington, which they wouldn't show me. [Laughter] That was probably the most exciting thing, substantively, that happened when I was in Mexico. Another interesting thing that happened was that it was my first, very disturbing brush with our friends in the Agency [Central Intelligence Agency]. I had a contact in the Mexican Foreign Office, Fernando De la Garde. He was on the Americas desk. Fernando and his wife, Olga, and my wife, Deedee, and I became pretty good friends. We used to meet twice a month, have supper, play bridge, and enjoy a very pleasant time together. He was an interesting and very useful fellow. You know, Mexico was one of the few Latin American countries which maintained diplomatic relations with Cuba. Consequently, they had one of the most fragrant diplomatic pouches in the world, filled with H. Upmann No. 1 Cuban cigars. I saw to it that Fernando never ran out of Jack Daniels whiskey, and he saw to it that I never ran out of Cuban cigars.

*Q: Sounded like a good exchange.*

MONTGOMERY: It was a good deal. One day Fernando told me how the Soviet Commercial Counselor tried to recruit him. Then he disappeared from sight, one day later. The Commercial Counselor was presumably a KGB [Soviet Intelligence] agent, talent scout, or what have you. De la Garde disappeared and his name began to be reported in the newspapers: a Foreign Office official "ha desaparecido" - has disappeared. It became a real cause célèbre.

*Q: Were you in contact with Olga, his wife? Did she know anything about this?*

MONTGOMERY: She knew nothing about it, was very upset, and so forth. One of the officers from CIA, without knowing what happened, wanted me to go to the Mexican Foreign Office and tell them about the recruitment attempt which Fernando had mentioned to me, apparently with a view toward getting that particular Soviet Commercial Counselor in trouble, the implication being that the Soviets had made Fernando disappear.

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I must say that, at this point, Wallie Steuart, the Political Counselor, stepped forth in resolute fashion. He said, "Jim, don't do it. We don't really know what happened. You'll look foolish if this turns out to be wrong." The CIA guy kept pushing me, so Wallie weighed in and told him to lay off.

The police kept searching for Fernando and finally found him, dead, on the edge of a lake - chopped into little pieces, in a trunk. It came out that it was his first wife and her blind American boyfriend who waylaid him, because Fernando had been trying to regain custody of his child by his first marriage.

*Q: So there was no political involvement at all.*

MONTGOMERY: No political involvement. His former wife and her lover disposed of Fernando and then fled the country. Percy Foreman took up their extradition case - and that's the last I remember of it.

*Q: Percy Foreman was an Embassy officer?*

MONTGOMERY: No, Percy Foreman was a well-known Texas defense attorney. It really put me on the alert that some CIA people were quite willing to use official Americans in a disposable fashion. My credibility would have been zilch if I had gone to the Mexican Foreign Office with this story of an alleged recruitment of Fernando. Steuart was absolutely right. His instincts were absolutely correct. Probably, somebody burned him at some point. It took about three weeks before the chopped up body was found. We buried his remains, one sad day, in his family mausoleum.

The other interesting thing that occurred to me in Mexico was something which did not have a lot of political significance, although, in a way, it does. It goes back to the question of illegal immigrants. This happened on November 1, 1965, the "Day of the Dead," [All Saints' Day for American Catholics]. This is an important day in Mexico, when everybody goes to the cemetery, sits around the graves of their ancestors, and celebrates all night.

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We learned that the son of a Mexican family who was living in Los Angeles, California, had joined the Marine Corps. The family name was Maldonado. He was killed in Vietnam. The family wanted to bury him in Mexico, in Marine uniform, and with full military honors, in the town of Irapuato, about half way between Mexico City and the U.S. border. This is a town famous for its strawberries. The family wanted the Embassy to send a representative to the funeral. So, I was sent.

Well, this was in Mexico, the "Halls of Montezuma," in the words of the Marine Hymn, where American Marine Guards in the Embassy are not allowed to wear their uniforms outside the Embassy. The annual Marine Ball [November 10 each year] is held in very private circumstances. So here was this Marine being buried in this little town in Mexico. I drove up to Irapuato. There really was no way to fly up there. I arrived at the family home. They were fairly middle class. The young man was lying in state in his casket, with an American flag displayed and with a young American Marine Corporal, in full uniform, standing guard beside the coffin in the house. The dead Marine had gone to a military high school in Irapuato. A lot of his classmates were there.

On the day of the funeral the hearse came, and the casket was slid into it, with the American flag on it. The Marine Corporal came out of the house, in uniform, and got into the hearse. We all went to the church. There was a funeral service in the church, which was somewhat unusual, because Mexican men usually don't go to church. They're anti-clerical, like in the "Power and the Glory," the novel by Graham Green, and all that. At the end of the service the funeral director wheeled the casket down the aisle and began to put it into the hearse. The dead Marine's classmates came and said, "No, no. We'll carry it." They hoisted the casket on their shoulders, with the American flag still on it, and started carrying it through the streets of the town. It was about two miles to the cemetery. All of the men, including me, took turns carrying the casket, with the Marine Corporal behind it, through the streets. His father kept making sure that the American flag didn't blow off the casket.

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We got to the cemetery, and the military school's marching band was at the grave. The cemetery was jammed. So this brass band marched down the paths of the cemetery, between the tombs, with this Marine Corporal in front of it, followed by the casket, with his father holding onto the American flag. They put the casket into one of these mausoleums above ground.

I heard from that family for many years. The name of this dead Marine is down there in Washington, DC, on the Wall, the Vietnam Memorial. It said a lot about the Mexican-American relationship - a lot that doesn't fit with the political horseshit that you hear about. As you can tell, the memory of this still touches me. I felt highly privileged to be there. Then the family went back to Los Angeles. But there was no bitterness at all toward the United States on the part of anybody that I met in Irajato. He had lived in the U.S., he had volunteered for the Marine Corps of his own free will, he paid the price which everybody knew could be exacted, and he was buried with full U.S. military honors - and particularly with U.S. Marine Corps military honors.

But, outside of that, I don't think that I touched history very much during my tour in Mexico. I think that I was able to generate a few insights as to how the country was run, because of this unusual breakfast arrangement we had. Breakfast emerged from the fact that a lot of the revolutionary leaders in the early part of the 20th century couldn't read. They'd learn things from each other at breakfast. So the idea of everybody getting together in the morning and having breakfast was quite common. As I say, you could go to places and end up with a lot of people at your table - and learn a lot, just by showing up. So, in that sense, it was very useful.

However, Mexico was not a major issue as far as the United States Government was concerned at that time. On a political level the United States was really preoccupied with Vietnam. Mexico was not causing a lot of trouble for the United States. The illegal immigration problem was certainly not as prominent as it is today.

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*Q: When did President Johnson work an arrangement for Mexican guestworkers to come to the United States on a temporary basis?*

MONTGOMERY: The guest workers arrangement had come and gone and come back again. You still see it in one form or another. They are not all illegals. This was called the “bracero” [worker] program.

Anyway, that was Mexico. I learned some things, particularly that things are not total high tension all the time, for one thing. I learned a lot about Mexico, which is a very foreign country. It is more foreign than a lot of countries in Europe, and it's right next door to us. It's a dangerous place. Everybody is armed to the teeth. Everybody carries guns in Mexico. You don't yell at people in traffic. You might get shot. [Laughter] Then there are the corruption problems. What we're seeing today in terms of corruption in Mexico was obviously under way in those days.

The idea that you could oppose the PRI was not well received. That clearly begun to change.

The Mexican police force was extremely summary in its procedures. Occasionally, American citizens would get caught in this. There is a legal procedure in Mexico called the “amparo,” which amounts to a kind of summons or an arrest warrant. If you were having trouble with a business partner, or anybody else, for that matter, you could go to some obscure court outside of town and get an “amparo” sworn out against this person. You would give it to the cops, who would arrest him. Arrest first, sort out later. You'd go to the prison. I never got this far, although I've been in a couple of Mexican jails. Lecumberri was the name of the big prison there. You'd go in there and find that there were guys awaiting trial. They'd been there for 10 years for an offense that carried a sentence of a year!

There was one guy in jail. He swore that he was innocent. My buddy, the Consular Officer, went to talk to him. He said, “What are you charged with?” The man in jail said, “I was

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standing around with a bunch of guys. A police car drove by, and one of the guys threw a rock at the car. We didn't know it was a police car at the time. The cops stopped and arrested us all for throwing rocks at the police car. I told them I was innocent." They said, "Never mind." The guy in jail said, "I've been here for five years, awaiting trial." He said, "I couldn't have thrown rocks at the police car since I had lost both arms below the elbow." And he was in jail for throwing rocks at a police car!

When you stop to think about it, particularly now with the demise of the Soviet Union, the PRI in Mexico is the regime longest in power in the world, without interruption, which has not been called to account by either an election, an invasion, or an internal revolution. There is no other country like Mexico. The country closest to this record is China. The Communist Party has been in power there since 1949. They are pikers compared to the Mexicans in the PRI, who have been in power since 1919. The Soviet Union used to be the other contender for this honor.

However, the government in Mexico is a lot more accountable to the people in informal ways, from the mere fact of living next to the United States.

Q: Speaking of that, we are used to referring to ourselves as "Americans." Do the Mexicans insist on calling us "Norteamericanos?" Were they sensitive on this point, because they are "Americans," too?

MONTGOMERY: They're not particularly sensitive. Our Embassy is called, "La Embajada de los Estados Unidos." When you have the word "Embajada" in front of it, they understood. You always said, "Embajada de los Estados Unidos." Of course, Mexico's official name is "Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos." However, that didn't seem to be a sensitive point.

Q: *Then in January, 1967, I have you down as completing your tour in Mexico City. What came next?*

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MONTGOMERY: Thai language training - at last! What I'd wanted in the first place but was diverted to studying Vietnamese. The Thai language training was at the Foreign Service Institute. It was given in a room about the same size as we used to study Vietnamese in 1959-1960. We moved from room to room. The course was marginally better organized than the Vietnamese language training. I was eight years older - 34 - and so it was harder. As we all know, language is an athletic exercise. It's not an intellectual exercise.

Going back to Vietnamese language training, I finished my thesis for a master's degree and got my degree from Emory University while I was in training. Actually, I received the degree when I was in Saigon. My thesis was on Grant's first campaign against Vicksburg.

Anyway, I came back from Mexico and went into Thai language training. We had more Thai tutors, so we didn't get so sick of seeing the same person. However, it was more difficult because, as I said, I was older, plus the fact that I didn't have an office or support. This was much more of a problem at that age, 34, than it was when I studied Vietnamese at age 24. I felt, in a way, that I was sort of regressing in terms of maturity and development. The elevators in that rattletrap building where the Foreign Service Institute was then located, on Key Boulevard in Rosslyn, didn't move very quickly. Anyway, I got through the course and went off to the Embassy in Bangkok. I actually went to Bangkok after studying the Thai language! I thought that I was going into the Political Section, but when I got there, they put me in the Political-Military Section. I was annoyed at this at the time but I ended up being grateful for this, because that's where the real political action was at that time, because of the Vietnam War. The Political Section would talk to the Thai Foreign Ministry - that was about it. There was no Parliament to speak of and not much of an opposition to the government. The main question for the Embassy was the political management problems of having 55,000 American troops stationed in Thailand. They were spread out over seven major airfields and a bunch of smaller installations.

The interesting part was the legacy which Ambassador Graham Martin had left. Len Unger had taken over as Ambassador from Graham Martin before I arrived in Bangkok

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in January, 1968. People were still there - in the Embassy and in the Thai Government - who remembered how the arrangements were put into place because of Ambassador Martin's extreme chutzpah [boldness]. Ambassador Martin played for all it was worth the fact that he was the personal representative of the President of the United States and that he was not running a field office of the Department of State. He was running an Embassy of the United States. He was running the Mission and was in charge of it because he got his authority directly from the President.

*Q: When did Graham Martin arrive in Bangkok and when did he leave?*

MONTGOMERY: He arrived in Bangkok in 1962 and left there in 1967. He set the framework for our presence in Thailand. The arrangement basically was that the Thai willingly gave access to all kinds of facilities and all kinds of cooperation, thanks to Ambassador Martin. However, these arrangements were to be managed, not by the Chief of JUSMAG [Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group], or even MACTHAI [Military Assistance Command, Thailand], which replaced JUSMAG. These arrangements were to be run by the Embassy. There was a continuing dialogue between the Embassy and the Thai Supreme Command, Forward, under Air Chief Marshal Dawee Chulasop, who was the Thai Supreme Commander. Dawee's deputy was Lieutenant General Kriangsak Chomanon, who was really the person we dealt with.

Whenever the U.S. military wanted to do something, we would go to see Gen. Kriangsak. He would say, "Yes," or "No," or "Yes, if you do this or that." The military operations conducted out of Thailand were to be kept within the parameters that had been established with the Royal Thai Government [RTG]. To that end the Political-Military Section would get a telegram every day from Seventh Air Force in Saigon, laying out the bombing missions for aircraft based in Thailand. We would check the map coordinates for those missions with the parameters we had established with the Thai Government. About once every three months Seventh Air Force would have to scrub a mission because we wouldn't let them do it - because it didn't fit within the agreement we had with the Thai.



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Then we'd go and see the Thai and would have to explain to them why we wanted to use the airplanes at Utapao Air Base to do this or that, instead of what we had been doing (Utapao Air Base had B-52 bombers. It was south-southeast of Bangkok and was part of the Sattahip military complex). Generally speaking, the Thai would then agree, but they never let go of that relationship.

Because of this arrangement, this was an enormously permissive relationship. The Thai let us do just about whatever we wanted to do, as long as it was within reason. You know, they wouldn't let us bomb Beijing from Utapao, or anything like that. However, this arrangement drove the Pentagon nuts, because none of it was written down. It was all on the basis of Memoranda of Conversations. There were desultory negotiations for a base rights agreement, which were never completed. And there were desultory negotiations for a status of forces agreement, which were never completed.

Q: How did you handle ordinary criminality?

MONTGOMERY: First of all, there was surprisingly little of it. I had a theory - and I still do - that, fortuitously, the knobs and indentations of American culture, particularly as carried by our troops, and the knobs and indentations of Thai culture matched and fit. There were 55,000 American troops in Thailand - without a Status of Forces Agreement. The number of jurisdictional cases that we had was, for all practical purposes, insignificant. It was just incredible. I think that we ended up with one American airman going into a Thai jail - for having killed somebody!

Q: *Happened all the time in Thailand.*

MONTGOMERY: In that sense it was a remarkable feat. But the Pentagon hated this arrangement. They would much rather have had much less in the way of facilities, in actual practice, if they had it written down.

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This brings us to the historical background, which is very important for understanding this very cooperative relationship which we had with the Thai. It was thanks to Ambassador Graham Martin that this happened. In 1962, after Martin had arrived in Thailand, you may recall that when the Pathet Lao got close to the Mekong River, we had some diplomatic negotiations with the Thai which resulted in the Rusk-Thanat Communique. This communique said that our obligations under the SEATO Treaty [Southeast Asian Collective Defense Agreement] were singular as well as collective. In other words, if the French and Pakistanis didn't want to go along with helping the Thai, we could do it anyway under the SEATO Treaty.

When the Pathet Lao got close to the border of Thailand, President John Kennedy decided to send American troops and aircraft to Thailand to snarl at the Pathet Lao. I think that the Thai read about this decision in the newspapers. Ambassador Martin had to pick up the pieces. The way he did it was to say to the Thais, "Look, we have the SEATO Treaty. We have a long history of adherence to collective security. You stood with us in Korea." And they did. The Thai were the first country to send troops to Korea. He continued, "We are both concerned about your border because of the Pathet Lao. We have things that we can provide, and you have things that you can provide. This is a partnership. We are going to be doing a number of things to support this partnership. One of the things that we have learned, as a result of the deployment of American troops, in pursuit of this joint objective, is that you have certain logistical shortcomings." He then began to set out a list of Thai logistical shortcomings that was exactly the same list as the U.S. military had set down. He portrayed them as part of a joint effort. This was called, The Special Logistics Agreement - Thailand, or SLAT.

The SLAT involved railroad reconstruction and building communications facilities and some highways. The Thai loved this, because it not only strengthened their logistical capabilities for military action but it also strengthened the country's economic infrastructure in a very real way. So this was okay with the Thais.

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When we decided to deploy large numbers of aircraft and supporting troops to Thailand, in the wake of the decision in 1965 to begin Operation ROLLING THUNDER, the bombing campaign against North Vietnam, we obviously needed a lot of cooperation from the Thai, because we planned to put some of these troops and aircraft into Thai air bases. We were also going to have to build a large number of infrastructure projects in Thailand, expanding port facilities, and so forth.

The genius of Ambassador Graham Martin was that he went to the Thai when this happened, and he said, "All right, it's now time for the second SLAT agreement. It is time for SLAT II." Martin took all of the U.S. military's logistical requirements and sold them to the Thai as part of a joint effort, not as part of the U.S. doing what it had to do to support itself. It was truly making a diplomatic silk purse out of a sow's ear. This complex of arrangements became known as SLAT II, an agreement reached between Ambassador Martin and the Thai. However, the thing is that Martin never told Washington about this package. We found out about it later on, and inadvertently, when Gen. Kriangsak, at some point, when he wanted something from us, kept saying that this was consistent with SLAT II. It took us a while to figure out what he was talking about. The Thai had institutional memory because many of their people dealt with us for many years. The Embassy had less institutional memory because of periodic transfers of personnel. Part of SLAT II was the idea that the political control of the American military presence would never get out of the hands of the Embassy - because if it did, the whole thing would fall apart, because the U.S. military would start talking about its requirements, rather than the U.S.-Thai jointly agreed upon effort to contain aggression in Southeast Asia. That was the secret of Thai generosity and Thai willingness to deal on a very open-handed basis with our requirements, because this was constantly portrayed as a U.S.-Thai effort. We contributed what we could, and the Thai contributed what they could. Ambassador Martin was able almost perfectly to sell almost every logistical requirement that we had - particularly because some of them were major programs - as an expression of this joint SLAT II concept.

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This almost broke down when Martin went to the Thai to obtain approval for the deployment of B-52 bombers to Utapao. The air base was already there, but the landing strips would require major strengthening to be really heavy runways to handle B-52s. The Thai were very concerned because the B-52s had the range to reach China, and this would upset the Chinese. The other aircraft we had, the F-4s and F-5s, didn't have the range to reach China.

So Martin told the Thai, "Listen, what are you worried about? One, we're not going to attack China. That's clear. Two, if we decided to attack China, we would use B-52s based elsewhere. Three, if we decided to use B-52s from Utapao, we wouldn't do so without your agreement. Four, we have all of these tactical, fighter aircraft in Thailand anyway. They would stand between Thailand and any Chinese pre-emptive attack. In any case, I can tell you that, if the Chinese were to attack Thailand, we would put those B-52s under Thai operational command." The Thai said, "On that basis, we'll let you deploy B-52s to Utapao." The Department of State never knew about this until much later. It was all down in Memoranda of Conversations.

*Q: But this was recorded in the Embassy in Bangkok.*

MONTGOMERY: This was recorded in the Embassy, and I'll tell you about that in a minute. Out of it came a strange document called The Joint U.S.-Thai Air Defense Agreement, which didn't make sense until you knew the history behind it. However, it was an attempt to do two things: codify in writing Martin's commitment to walk the cat back so that we really were not going to put U.S. aircraft under Thai command, and do it in such a fashion that the Thai wouldn't notice. That was the zenith of Martin's silk purse approach to Thai-U.S. requirements.

Of course, the B-52s were deployed to Utapao, and they never attacked China. That was fine, and the whole thing was never called into question. However, the Thai felt secure about it.

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*Q: This is the Thai military, who were still running Thailand at thtime. The Thai civilians were not.*

MONTGOMERY: This is when the highest rank in the Thai military was Prime Minister. The Minister of Defense was also the Prime Minister - Thanom Kittikachorn.

So this is sort of the situation that I inherited and the political dance that I did for three years in the Political-Military Section of the Embassy in Bangkok. It was a very interesting exercise. I think that our ability to continue the Vietnam War as long as we did depended on maintaining that framework, even though, in large part, we did so unknowingly because no one in Washington knew about the SLAT II arrangement. When I arrived in the Embassy, nobody in the Embassy knew about the SLAT II arrangement. It had been forgotten. I arrived in 1968, and the SLAT II smoke and mirrors arrangement had been pulled off in 1965-1966.

The way we found out about the SLAT II arrangement was that Gen. Kriangsak kept referring to it. We kept thinking, "What's this? Well, he doesn't speak English all that well." Then, in July, 1969, we received notice that the Symington Select subcommittee, which was investigating U.S. security commitments and arrangements abroad, was looking into all of the arrangements which the United States had made around the world and what kind of unauthorized promises had been made to foreign governments by the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government which could lead us into another Vietnam War. The Subcommittee was going to wring all of these out and find out what was going on.

To that end, the Subcommittee decided to send a team of investigators consisting of Walter Pinkus, who still reports for "The Washington Post," and Roland Paul, who, I think, is a lawyer in North Carolina. They were the outriders of this rediscovery of the SLAT II arrangement. They wanted to know all about U.S. security commitments and arrangements with the Thai. Ambassador Unger asked me to prepare for their visit.

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The first thing he wanted to do was to find out about our security commitments and arrangements with the Thai - something that nobody then in the Embassy had looked into.

Fortunately, the Embassy in Bangkok had not followed the established practice of retiring its files every two years. So I got into the files. I came up with a loose-leaf notebook about 3-4 inches thick. It was filled with copies of security commitments and arrangements that the Embassy had forgotten about, and Washington never knew about. These agreements were pretty amazing. There was a CONFIDENTIAL addendum to the Rusk-Thanat Communique of 1962 in which Secretary of State Rusk said that we would never do anything less for Thailand than we had done for the Republic of Vietnam. There was a Memorandum of Conversation about the Utapao arrangements for the deployment of B-52s. I put this in a telegram and sent it back to Washington. Norm Hannah, who was the Deputy Chief of Mission in Bangkok, said, "You can't tell that to Washington!" I said, "Well, it's in the record." He said, "What asshole wrote that down?" I said, "You did." [Laughter] We also found out about the SLAT II arrangement in the Embassy files and how Ambassador Martin had obtained authorization for the deployment of B-52s to Utapao, using the precedent of the SLAT I arrangement.

So this is the way we got ready for the visit of Pinkus and Paul. They came to Bangkok and spent about a week. I was their Escort Officer. We toured every U.S. military outhouse and went to just about every U.S. installation that we could find. We never gave them a copy of the Black Book I mentioned before but would draw from it as necessary. I had one of those little moments of glory that one occasionally has in a career. On the way to the airport, when Pinkus, Paul, and I were speaking to each other again and were being friendly, Pinkus said to me, "Well, Jim, I guess you get a lot of people from Congress coming through and asking questions like that." The light bulb went on, and I said, "You know something, you're the first. Nobody from Congress has been out here asking questions like this in living memory." This was in 1969.

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Then I went back to Washington with Ambassador Unger in November, 1969, for a week of hearings before the Symington Select Subcommittee in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee room, on the first floor of the Capitol. At this hearing Ambassador Unger and his team, including me, were on one side of the table. I was a presence grise, seeking eminence [an adviser trying to make myself useful to Ambassador Unger]. On the other side of the table were Senators Fulbright, Mansfield, and Symington, dragging out the full nature of our security arrangements and commitments to the Thai. The dominant emotion that came across that green baize table was one of embarrassment because these Senators had voted for these authorizations and appropriations all of these years and never asked any questions. This was the beginning of Congressional reassertion of its prerogatives and authority - not just in Southeast Asia but in the conduct of foreign policy as a whole.

They had been content, up until this point, to let the President of the United States act like a Prime Minister with a solid, Parliamentary majority behind him. We are not a Parliamentary democracy. We are a Congressional democracy, which is something different. In many ways these Senators had sort of abdicated their responsibilities since the beginning of World War II and they never really took them back until this set of hearings in 1969. They began to reassert themselves on everything else, as we saw, and everything else flowed from this hearing.

Q: Of course, we had had a series of Presidents from the Democratic Party, with the exception of Presidents Eisenhower (1953-1961) and Nixon, who came into office in 1969. In other words, most of these security commitments and arrangements had been entered into by Presidents Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson - all of whom were Democrats, as these Senators knew full well.

MONTGOMERY: Well, this was in 1969. What was interesting when we arrived in November, 1969, for the hearings, was that the White House wanted nothing to do with Ambassador Leonard Unger. He was on his own. He was given no guidance or anything

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else. The implication was, "If you get out of this, you can continue as Ambassador to Thailand."

*Q: Henry Kissinger was the National Security Adviser to the President at the time of these hearings.*

MONTGOMERY: He was the National Security Adviser. It was right in the midst of one of the main demonstrations against the Vietnam War, aimed at shutting Washington down. Ambassador Graham Martin testified, too. Q: He was Ambassador to Italy, wasn't he? He was presumably brought back for those hearings.

MONTGOMERY: I think so. This is when all sorts of things began to fall into place, once we had that Black Book. We began to understand just what Martin had done in the way of entering into U.S. security commitments to Thailand. He had basically given a NATO-type [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] commitment to the Thai - an unequivocal commitment. In return, he had gotten back this enormous operational flexibility. That explains what happened. There was a time when the Thai - that is, Gen. Kriangsak - wanted a road built. He didn't get it, because it didn't fit in with U.S. military requirements.

*Q: What road was this?*

MONTGOMERY: It was a cut-off road to Ubon, near the Mekong River in the southern part of northeastern Thailand. The road was to go due east from Korat. The existing road made a sort of right angle, and Gen. Kriangsak wanted to go across the hypotenuse. We tried and tried to get the Pentagon to fund this road. I think that eventually they did, because there is a road there.

I think that what happened is that the Pentagon didn't understand that there was a commitment to the Thai. They didn't understand it until they wanted to deploy a group of C-130 gunships to Ubon to support operations in Vietnam. The Thai never asked for



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a direct quid pro quo, but they made it clear that it certainly would be easier for them to support those C-130s if that road were built - and it would be.

There was an incident where I think that I touched history. In the early days of the deployment of United States forces to Thailand Ambassador Martin had sold the Thai on the idea of an air control radar on top of Doi Inthanon Mountain, the highest mountain peak in Thailand - about 8,000 feet high. It's about 60 miles south of Chiang Mai. We had sold the Thai on this idea and then, later on, decided that we didn't need it. It then sort of disappeared as a subject of interest to us.

It was finally built because the Thai later decided that they wanted it. We wanted to put in a space tracking radar station to track Chinese missiles at Kokha, an abandoned Thai airfield, south of Lampang, in northern Thailand. The Thais said, "Well, if you want a space tracking radar to track Chinese missiles, that might annoy the Chinese. We need to 'beef up' our air defenses. Let's get the radar station at Doi Inthanon up and running." The U.S. was not interested in building Doi Inthanon. So I brokered a deal. The U.S. Air Force got the Kokha space tracking radar station, and the Thai got the Doi Inthanon radar station. Boy, the Pentagon hated every second of this transaction. However, it was clear that the Thai were not going to allow one radar station to go in without the other. The U.S. Navy Seabees showed up, built a road, and put up a radar station on top of Doi Inthanon. The Chinese never fired a missile past the Kokha radar station. [Laughter]

So for me this assignment was an extremely interesting exercise in military diplomacy. The SLAT II arrangement continued until the SS MAYAGUEZ crisis. I was gone from the Embassy by that time. On this occasion we violated every understanding we had with the Thai about our use of their military facilities and went ahead and did things that we had never cleared with them. I think that this was one of the reasons why the Thai kicked us out of our bases in Thailand. They made us close Utapao, from which we launched some of the helicopters in support of operations during the MAYAGUEZ crisis - without telling the Thai. We probably could have hung on to our Thai bases for quite a while after the fall of

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Saigon, with residual facilities. Who knows when we would need them? But the Thai were having none of it. There was a civilian Prime Minister at the time [Kukrit Pramoj], and he couldn't stand the pressure from the Thai military.

Q: This sort of brings us to the end of your time in the Political Military Section in the Embassy in Bangkok. Your next assignment was in Chiang Mai.

MONTGOMERY: There is one other thing I would like to mention about my time in Bangkok. You may recall that there was a false start in the drawdown of American forces in Thailand in late 1970 or early 1971. We were already pulling some of our planes out of Thailand. We were reaching the point where we were really thinking about turning facilities back to the Thai. In other words it was clear that we weren't going to be there much longer. So we began negotiations with the Thai.

This is really where the construct that Graham Martin had put together began to fray very severely around the edges because the U.S. military were no longer interested in Thailand. They thought that they weren't going to need the Thai any more. They were just ready to loot, pillage, and leave. I caught somebody taking a barometer off the control tower wall at Takhli Air Base. That sort of thing was going on. Obviously, your career in the U.S. military was enhanced, the more things you could get out of Thailand. No provision had been made to help the Thai bridge the gap between American maintenance of these facilities and getting the Thai budgets up to supporting them.

Q: We had the same problem in England at the end of World War II in Europe. The war in the Pacific was still going on. Here was all this equipment at American bases in England. There was an astonishing change in the attitude of the American military - exactly parallel to the attitude in Thailand which you were just describing.

MONTGOMERY: It was too bad, because this drawdown of American forces in Thailand started, and then it stopped. The written record is pretty good on this. Somebody may set out to write the history of our relations with the Thai during the Vietnam War, which I

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consider a very worthwhile project. Maybe this is something I should do myself, instead of what I'm doing now. This was an interesting episode. Q: What you could do, Jim, is to talk to the Office of the Historian of the Department of State. They might be interested in having you sketch out more or less the principal points. It would save them a lot of trouble, because historians with no special background in Thailand are going to be doing this. You could speed the process up considerably.

MONTGOMERY: In any case, this was not a happy episode. Actually, I think that we did it better when we finally did it - because we'd had this false start in 1970-1971.

This was also the time when we reneged on a promise to turn over to the Thai a fully functional field hospital in Korat. That was sort of the deal when we built the hospital. It was a case of saving nickels and dimes again. It totally violated the understanding we had with the Thai. I think that, after the exchange of an incredible number of telegrams, we finally got the Pentagon to do the right thing. Was it ever grudging. They thought, "How are we ever going to explain this to Congress? This is the end. We aren't running an assistance program, you know. We support U.S. forces, and they don't need that hospital any more." So we had to go back and dig out the record of the original negotiations and show the commitments that had been made to get the Pentagon to come around. The commitments had been made by their predecessors in the Pentagon, and they didn't feel obliged to live up to them.

Even by the time I left the Embassy in 1974 for Chiang Mai, we still hadn't gone through the final drawdown.

Q: That happened in 1975. I was in Bangkok as Political Counselor by that time. The withdrawal of American troops had been going on for some time. I arrived in Bangkok in August, 1975. The strength was in the order of 40,000, so it hadn't gone very far.

MONTGOMERY: So, after three years of faithful service in Bangkok I was rewarded with the job of Principal Officer at the Consulate in Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand. I wanted

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this particular assignment very badly. After the testimony before the Symington Select Subcommittee Ambassador Unger asked me if I would be interested in being assigned as Principal Officer in Chiang Mai. He had had the chance to see me up close for quite a while and felt that I could do the job. I certainly felt that I could do the job and very much wanted it. So, after a lot of cables were exchanged with the Department, the assignment finally came through.

So, on June 1, 1971, we piled our family into an Embassy car and went to the Hualampong Railroad Station and got on the night train to Chiang Mai. My family included Deedee, my wife, Laura, Darrow, and Danielle, our children, and two dogs.

*Q: Where was Danny born?*

MONTGOMERY: Danny was born in Mexico, in 1965, in the British-Canadian Hospital.

So we arrived in Chiang Mai on the morning of June 2, 1971, were met at the railroad station, got into the official Consulate sedan, a Holden [Australian General Motors version of the Chevrolet], with the U.S. and Consular flags flapping from the fenders, and drove off to the Consulate. We had a Holden sedan because it was a General Motors product, with the wheel on the right hand side. America was no longer making right hand drive cars - only Canada was, in North America, and, of course, Australia was also. Australia was considerably closer to Thailand than Canada, so that's how we ended up with a Holden.

I sent the customary telegram saying that I had assumed charge of the Consulate. At this point I'm probably going to get a little more discursive, if I may.

*Q: Sure, but first of all, how big an office was the Consulate in Chiang Mai?*

MONTGOMERY: Well, let's see. That's a very complicated question to answer. Before I get to the Consulate itself, I'd like to talk a little bit about Chiang Mai and what made it unique and different.

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In many ways, when we arrived there, Chiang Mai was out of time. It was in a time warp, as it were. None of the mass marketing phenomena - so apparent in Bangkok - had visibly reached Chiang Mai. No McDonald's, no Taco Bell's, no Pizza Hut's, no Kentucky Fried Chicken. When you went to buy things in a hardware store, for example, items were not neatly packaged. The nails were in a keg. The laundry detergent was in a big box, and you bought it by the kilogram. Hammers didn't have labels on them. Hammers were hammers, made by a local iron and steel forging operation. A lot of handicraft items were still made. I had a fulltime carpenter on the Consulate staff to get things done, run the Consulate, and keep it up to snuff. The final segment of the all weather road had not yet been put in, linking Chiang Mai to Bangkok. It was put in shortly after we arrived, but you still could not drive on a paved surface from Bangkok to Chiang Mai.

In some ways Chiang Mai was still the independent, autonomous Kingdom of Chiang Mai. There was a Chiang Mai Royal Family. There were princes of that family still around.

*Q: In fact, didn't the Consulate occupy buildings and space belong into the Chiang Mai Royal Family?*

MONTGOMERY: Yes. They lost it to the Thai Government during the Depression of the 1930s, and we rented it from the Thai Government for \$150 a month. That's a pretty good price. The Prince of Chiang Mai, Chao Ratchaburi, was the last of his line. He was still alive when we got there.

As you know, the King and Queen of Thailand would visit Chiang Mai several times a year. They would come up on a plane, and the Consular Corps would gather to meet them. We'd wait at the airport. He would never come in when he said he was coming. I spent a lot of time waiting at the airport. Always waiting with us was Chao Ratchabut, in his wheelchair, with his wife. When the King would get off the airplane, the first person he would greet would be Chao Ratchabut. For his part Chao Ratchabut would hand the King

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the Sword of Chiang Mai. The King would hand the sword to an aide. Then, when the King would leave Chiang Mai, he would give the sword back to Chao Ratchabut.

Well, Chao Ratchabut died. The first time after he died, the person standing there with the Sword of Chiang Mai was the Governor of Chiang Mai, appointed by the central Thai Government. He gave the sword to the King. When the King left Chiang Mai, he gave the sword to his appointed governor, thereby symbolizing the last step in the disappearance of the separate status of Chiang Mai.

*Q: This Governor had been appointed to various places previously?*

MONTGOMERY: Yes, he was like a Foreign Service Officer. The death of Chao Ratchabut symbolized the end of the last flicker of Chiang Mai's local authority. I had the impression that I really was living in a different place. In many ways I was in an imperial outpost.

The position of a foreign Consul in Chiang Mai was very special, because during the 19th century, and well into the 20th century, Consuls had extraterritorial authority over their own nationals. They could hold courts - Consular Courts - and hang people - and they did. American Consuls never assumed that authority and never exercised it. But the British and French Consuls did. So the idea of a Consul was that he was a pretty heavy hitter in that context. That sort of increased the air of feudal authority that Consuls had. Consuls were expected to provide advice and service, particularly to their staff. I'm answering your question in a roundabout way, because I was the Consul.

I remember one night that the guard called up from the gate at about 3:00 AM. The guard was the son of Uncle Som, the carpenter. He needed to see me. So I went down, and he said that his father, Uncle Som, was in the hospital. He had a ruptured appendix, and the doctors wanted to operate on him. He was distressed with these doctors. He wouldn't let the doctors operate unless the Consul told him to let them do it. So I whipped on a pair of pants and a shirt and went over to the McCormick Hospital, which was run by American

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Seventh Day Adventist Missionaries. I went into the hospital and was shown into the room where Uncle Som lay in his bed. I said, "How are you, Uncle?" He said, "I'm not too well. I'm certainly not going to let these doctors cut me open." I said, "Why not?" He said, "Well, I've been to the Buddhist monk who gave me medicine that's going to make me better. My son brought me here to the hospital." I said, "Well, you know, I think that maybe you should do what the doctors say." He asked, "Do you really think so?" I said, "Yes, I think so. I've seen this kind of situation before and I think you had better do this." So he said, "Well, if the Consul says that I should, I'll do it." So I signaled to a nurse who was lurking nearby. She came running in. They hauled him off, cut out his appendix, and he was fine.

This incident was of a piece with the annual Dam Hua ceremony. This involved pouring water on another person's head during Song Kran, or the water festival. This was a big festival at the end of the dry season, just before the rains start. The way it worked - have you been in the Consulate in Chiang Mai?

Q: Yes.

MONTGOMERY: You know that little sala off to one side when you enter the Consulate gate? Well, my wife, Deedee, and I would stand there, wearing traditional Thai costumes. There would be a chair with a table next to it. In the middle of the table was a big, silver bowl that had been blessed by the Buddhist monks down the street. All of the local employees of the Consulate were there, not only those of the Consulate but also of the Agency [Central Intelligence Agency], which had a facility within the same compound as the Consulate. All of them, their families, their children, their grandchildren, and their grandparents would all gather behind the Consulate Residence - sort of diagonally across the lawn, looking out from the sala. When I sat down in the chair, a couple of musicians with drums and cymbals would lead off a procession, beginning behind the house. There must have been almost 100 people by the time they were all gathered together. They would come dancing across the lawn in a procession with the drums beating and the cymbals clanging. They would carry a float made out of palm fronds and so forth, with fruit,

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vegetables, eggs, and offerings of all kinds in it. They would dance up and bring me the offerings. I would thank them.

Then they would line up, from the most senior down to the youngest. I would lean forward in my chair, with my head extended. They would take a little cup of the blessed water and pour it on my head. They would catch the drops as they fell off my head and splash the water on their faces. This was for luck for the New Year. Everybody would go through this ceremony, all the way down to the youngest member of the clan.

*Q: By young kids, you mean...*

MONTGOMERY: Little toddlers, yes. Then we would wheel out the food and liquor, and many of them would get roaring drunk, throw water on each other, and dance late into the night. I don't think that you do that in too many posts.

*Q: I doubt that they do that any more at the Consulate in Chiang Mai, either.*

MONTGOMERY: They probably don't. But it was all part of this impression that Chiang Mai, when I was there, was really out of time.

The American community in Chiang Mai, in many ways, was also out of time, particularly the non-official American community because it was largely composed of missionaries. An arrangement had been worked out that the Catholic missionaries went to northeastern Thailand, after they were kicked out of China and Burma. The Protestant missionaries, who had similarly been expelled from China and Burma, ended up in northern Thailand. So in the Chiang Mai area there were families who went along with the missionary function. The Protestant missionaries started a school, the Chiang Mai Educational Center. It was originally intended to teach missionary children but later grew to take care of the whole missionary community. They had their churches, their congregations, and each other. There were enough of them so that it was a little like an American community - but it



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was out of what you might think the 1930s were. So we lived in that American community, as well as in the larger international community, as well as the Thai community.

There was no television. We didn't have much in the way of local radio programs. You could get short wave programs and that type of thing, but most of us didn't speak Thai well enough to follow local programs. There was a limited supply of books in English.

*Q: There was a USIS [United States Information Service] librarianship there, wasn't there?*

MONTGOMERY: Yes, and it had part of the limited supply of books in English which I mentioned. So we had to amuse ourselves in ways that our parents amused themselves in the 1930s and before. That was another sort of unusual aspect of life in Chiang Mai.

Leon Owens, the son of Anna Owens, who figured in the book and movie, "Anna and the King of Siam," opened a lumber mill in the late 19th century, when he was an adult. You could almost feel as if he was still around. There were people who remembered people who knew him, and you could talk to them.

Chiang Mai was a very special place for the Thai because, in many ways, it was what everyone thought that Thailand should be, and Bangkok no longer was. I don't know whether I'm getting this across...

*Q: Yes, you're making your point.*

MONTGOMERY: It was a special time and a special place. I think that this sense has largely disappeared now. The international market has arrived with both feet and landed on the place. At the time of which I speak, there were no signs for Coca Cola to speak of and really no supermarkets. If you wanted things, you went to the market. I think that the highway to Bangkok made the difference, because the big trucks began coming in. In the time I am talking about, air travel was expensive. You brought things up on the train from

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Bangkok. Our visitors would come up on the train. But there weren't all that many of them, and it was also expensive. Refrigerated trucks began to arrive, and that made a difference.

The liquor that we drank came out of the military post exchange system. I don't remember whether you could go and buy a bottle of scotch whisky at that time. On second thought you probably could in Chiang Mai. I just never had the occasion to buy it on the open market.

So, enough of the scene setting. What was the U.S. presence in Chiang Mai? I was going there, not just as the American Consul, but, somewhat like Ambassador Graham Martin, as the senior U.S. representative. I was not the representative of the President of the United States, but certainly of the American Ambassador in Bangkok. It was a variegated presence. There was the Consulate, which had three officers, if you include the CIA representative. I had an American secretary whom I had to finagle to arrange for her employment, because she wasn't authorized in the staffing pattern of the Consulate. The Embassy wouldn't give her a security clearance, which might have limited her usefulness. However, I arranged for my CIA friends across the yard to give her a security clearance, and I figured that what was good enough for them ought to be good enough for the Embassy in Bangkok. So that's how I dealt with that problem.

When the CIA Base in Chiang Mai had to change its name from the Border Patrol Police Advisory Group to something else, they almost had a contest in the newspapers to pick a new name, since everybody knew exactly who they were. It was no secret as to who was in the CIA group.

The Consulate probably had about 20 local employees. We had the CIA group, a Drug Enforcement Administration detachment, USOM [United States Operations Mission - Agency for International Development], USIS, and Peace Corps volunteers. I had an Agricultural Attache attached to the Consulate. He had been sent out to help the United

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Nations group come up with substitute crops that might be grown instead of opium poppies.

There were also several military units, some of them associated with MACTHAI [Military Assistance Command, Thailand], or JUSMAG [Joint United States Military Advisory Group] detachments. Some of these people were in Chiang Mai. The headquarters of the regional advisory group was in Phitsanulok, south of Chiang Mai. That was where the Thai Third Army Headquarters was located. The supervisory JUSMAG detachment for the area was there. There were satellite groups in Chiang Mai and Nan [in northern Thailand]. There was a one-man advisory unit at the Chiang Mai airport. There was a detachment of Thai OV-10s [ground support and reconnaissance aircraft] there. There was a U.S. military unit that operated the communications link from Chiang Mai to the rest of the world, using a military system. Chiang Mai was really the end of the line. My phone was just about as far away as you could get from Washington, using land lines.

*Q: Could you phone Washington from Chiang Mai on your office phones, through this U.S. military system?*

MONTGOMERY: Yes. It took a while, but I could do it. There was a Radio Detection Unit about 10 miles north of Chiang Mai. It communicated via a microwave relay to another Radio Detection Unit in the Chiang Mai airport, which then linked into the U.S. military communications system. There was one military person attached to the Commissary.

There was the space tracking radar station, with perhaps 100 U.S. military personnel assigned, over in the next valley from Chiang Mai - in Lampang Province. Also outside of Lampang was a U.S. Coast Guard detachment, 400 miles from the nearest ocean. It ran a LORAN [Long Range Aid to Navigation System] station. This station triangulated with several others in Southeast Asia. South of Chiang Mai, working on the Doi Inthanon radar which we talked about earlier, was a U.S. Navy Seabee detachment. There was also an APO [Army Post Office] detachment. There was a small U.S. Air Force unit on the road

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up to the Thai radar station at Doi Inthanon which ran a seismograph. This was part of the worldwide nuclear explosion detection system.

*Q: I visited it in 1975.*

MONTGOMERY: Had we turned it over to the Thai by then?

Q: No. I visited it initially when it was still a functioning U.S. unit, during my first visit to Chiang Mai. Then I visited it a couple of years later. It had been turned over to the Thai. What had been a very well kept, beautifully maintained base had been ransacked. The Thai had no need for it. There was no point in their trying to operate it. By agreement we turned the facility back to the Thai.

MONTGOMERY: Did we turn the seismographs over to the Thai? There was some thought that they might go to Chiang Mai University.

*Q: That was under consideration, but that arrangement fell through.*

MONTGOMERY: That's too bad. I remember that shortly after this facility was installed, somebody started a rock quarry operation on the other side of the mountain, without telling anybody. The first few explosions were reported as involving nuclear devices.

*Q: It happened that that facility really duplicated another facility in central Australia, which I also visited. It really wasn't needed.*

MONTGOMERY: It became an issue because we never told the local Thai officials what it was for. Finally, it became an issue because Thai students were starting to say that it was some kind of a spy facility or something of that nature. So I took the Provincial Governor up there, gave him a tour, and that was the end of that problem.

So, one way or another, there were a lot of Americans in and around Chiang Mai. As is often the case, they were perfectly prepared to go off on their own and do things that may

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or may not have been helpful to overall U.S. interests. The trick for the Consul - that is, for me - was how to hold them all together, particularly as I was given no direct authority to do so. To deal with this problem, I drew upon my father's skills as a ward heeler. I remembered the power of a favor. I was willing to accept responsibility when these various units needed a decision made and wanted somebody to refer to, so that they wouldn't do something stupid, because the Consul in Chiang Mai wouldn't let them do it. I never had my knees cut out from under me in that connection.

I remember the time when the Chief of Base [senior officer of the CIA detachment] came to me and said that he was under orders to poison streams up along the Burmese border to stop thcaravans transporting opium to market. The idea was to kill the horses. I said, "Well, what about the people downstream?" He said, "Well, nobody said anything about that. They just told me that I had to poison the streams." I said, "What would you do if I told you not to do it?" He said, "I'll tell Bangkok that you told me not to do it, and I wouldn't do it." So I said, "Don't do it." He said, "Thank God!" That was the end of it - we never heard about this idea again.

*Q: Somebody's hot flash which got stopped in time.*

MONTGOMERY: Yes. The APO detachment was in my back yard. So all of the Americans assigned to the Chiang Mai area had to come there to get their mail. This created a central function.

I used ceremony when I could, to hold the official U.S. community together. For instance, when Chao Ratchabut died, we attended as a group, with representatives from every American entity in the area - in full uniform for the military. We all attended the funeral, called on the widow, and so forth. We had a rehearsal at my residence before we went to the funeral. We would call as a group, with selected representatives from each of the various units, on the Provincial Governor on the King and Queen's birthdays. I

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would always be the first to give a dinner or host a reception for a newly-arrived, official American. I would gather everyone in the Consulate to establish that point.

The U.S. Navy Seabee detachment commander came to me and said, "You know, our Admiral is coming to visit us. We don't have a nice car. We've just got these rotten old jeeps." He got my car. I asked if the Admiral had a flag. He said, "A little one." I said, "Well, put it on the flag post on my car." That took care of the admiral. That guy would do anything for me after that. The captain running the communications detachment at the airport had a Thai girl friend. He didn't want to leave her and wanted to stay another year in Chiang Mai. I sent off a telegram to his boss in Hawaii, saying that this man had to stay in Chiang Mai, considering the politics of the situation, and so forth. So he got to stay for another year. I never had any trouble with him. This was the ward heeler approach. It was the only thing that I had. I couldn't ask the Department for instructions.

This also led into something else. Foreign Service posts are not supposed to have slush funds, but it would be irresponsible to run a post without a little money on the side to deal with various contingencies. We had 11 Lam Yai trees in the yard, which produce something like a leech nut. We would let the harvest from 10 trees out on bids. We would get several hundred dollars from this source. The eleventh tree we would harvest for ourselves, for big baskets of fruit to send to the Ambassador, the DCM, and the Political and Economic Counselors.

*Q: They stopped doing that by the time I got to Bangkok in 1975.*

MONTGOMERY: Too bad. As a part of the feudal quality of life in Chiang Mai, we put the Lam Yai money in a little red box, which we would trot out from time to time. We always needed a little bit of money from time to time - say, \$50 to do something.

*Q: Were you inspected by the Foreign Service Inspectors? Did you refer to that?*

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MONTGOMERY: I didn't refer to that. I also hid my two unauthorized cars. The money was in this little red box. We could hide that. We didn't tell the inspectors about that.

At one time we almost had an embarrassment of riches because that U.S. radio unit north of town, which I mentioned earlier, was connected to the airport by copper wire. People kept stealing the copper to melt down, make statues of Buddha out of it, and sell them to the tourists. Eventually, we replaced the copper wire with a microwave relay. We had 10 miles of copper wire left over! The Air Force detachment wanted to split the proceeds with me. They would melt it down and sell it, and it would bring in several thousand dollars. This would be too much and might cause trouble. So I said, "Look, there's an orphanage in town which needs a new roof. Let's spend the money on that." They said, "All right," and that took care of that problem. However, I was pleased that they asked me about it.

A lot of my time was spent managing relationships between American agencies. The most difficult and potentially dangerous relationship I had to manage was between the CIA and DEA detachments. They were always out to get each other. The DEA had the reward money to pay to people providing information on the narcotics traffic, and the CIA had the operational smarts to get things done. So the thing was to keep the DEA sufficiently involved in the operations to avoid problems.

*Q: I think that this is a difficult relationship, all over the world, including in the United States.*

MONTGOMERY: I finally dealt with it by holding a meeting every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, at 11:00 AM in the little classified conference room I had built on the side of the Consulate. I would sit down with the DEA and CIA guys and make them talk. It really lowered the temperature. They found that they had things to tell each other and they did. And problems were resolved before they became too troublesome. Nobody wrote down the proceedings of these meetings. The situation became more manageable. That was consistently the most demanding problem. Later on, as I'll mention later, something came up when I was on home leave, which almost tore things up. That was consistently the

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most time-consuming thing I had to do, managing the DEA- CIA presence, figuring out ways of keeping everybody looking to me, in the first instance, to provide the answer. We generally pulled it off. There were a couple of times when we missed but, generally speaking, nobody went off and did something that was truly dangerous without checking with me. Except on one occasion. I will tell that story because it was my most blatant failure, and it was my fault.

Shortly before I went on home leave in 1972, the CIA Chief of Base came and told me that they were bringing in an officer who would figure out how to cooperate with the Thai and get at Lo Hsi Haan's opium refinery across the river in Burma from Mae Sai, in the town of Ta Chi Lek. This new officer would be brought in under Consulate cover, as the Treasurer of the American Consulate. I neglected to tell Jim Bullington, my Vice Consul, that this was going to happen, before I went on home leave. I had just given Jim the background on this assignment but didn't tell him that it was imminent. They brought in this officer while I was on home leave.

This CIA officer worked with some Thai hired guns. They came up with a plan to take some explosives out of Chiang Mai, up the road to Chiang Rai. Then they would take the explosives up the Chiang Rai-Mae Sai road. The designated person would sneak across the river into Burma and plant the explosives in the opium refinery, which you could actually see from the Thai side of the river. You could throw rocks at it! This effort was intended to confound the bad guys - the narcotics traffickers. This was being done under CIA auspices.

So they loaded up a taxicab with explosives - about 50 pounds of plastique - in Chiang Mai and headed north. Now, at the same time the CIA also had an advisory function with the Thai Border Patrol Police [BPP]. They were working with the Border Patrol Police to improve automobile surveillance in northern Thailand, so that the drug traffickers couldn't bring narcotics into Thailand in taxicabs. On the same day that the Treasurer of the American Consulate in Chiang Mai was headed north with 50 pounds of plastique



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explosive in the trunk of a taxi, the other part of the Agency had gotten its advisory function up and running and had a bunch of Thai police out on the road, stopping taxicabs - to make sure that they weren't carrying bad things. Needless to say, the Thai Police stopped the taxicab of the Treasurer of the American Consulate in Chiang Mai and found 50 pounds of plastique explosive. Our Treasurer, an American, ended up in jail.

There was a great flurry and fluttering of 100 baht notes, and all of that type of stuff. They finally got the Treasurer out of jail and out of Thailand. The Agency then tried to blame the DEA for this episode. They actually stole stationery from the DEA. Can you believe this?

*Q: I can believe this with difficulty but I can believe it.*

MONTGOMERY: The Agency stole stationery from the DEA and sent letters to the Thai Police, apologizing for what had happened, and all of that kind of thing - without telling the DEA. The DEA had people in Mae Sai that day with some officials from the Narcotics Control Board, which the Thai Government had established. Obviously, if that explosive device had gone off, the DEA would have been blamed, because there was the visible presence, right across the river. There was no coordination between the DEA and the CIA on this.

This incident occurred shortly before I returned to Chiang Mai from home leave. One Sunday after I came back from home leave Jim Petit, who was the DEA representative in Chiang Mai, came to see me and told me this story. He had been piecing it together. The CIA people still hadn't told him about their involvement. He said, "They stole my stationery, this guy went to jail, there were all of these explosives. They talked about Lo Hsi Haan, but nobody told me anything about it. I was in Mae Sai that day." Then it all fell into place, so I had to come clean with Jim Petit. He was furious. I talked to him for about eight hours. He was going to resign and go public with this affair. I had to promise him that I would go down to Bangkok and tell the Ambassador what had happened. I did this the following day. I got on a plane, went down to Bangkok, and told Ed Masters, who was

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Charge d'Affaires. Ed was really sore about this. The CIA Chief of Station in Bangkok had lied to him. Apologies were extended all around, and it was at that point that I started the business of meeting with the DEA and CIA representatives three days a week.

*Q: Did the DEA office in Bangkok know about this operation?*

MONTGOMERY: No, I don't think so. The authorization for this operation went from the White House to CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia, to the Chief of Station in Bangkok, to the CIA Chief of Base in Chiang Mai. By "White House" I mean that it was probably Egil ("Bud") Krogh. He was one of the "plumbers" who ended up going to jail in connection with the Watergate Affair.

The CIA people in Chiang Mai arranged to go out and snatch an opium caravan without telling the DEA people - and then expected the DEA to pay the reward to the Thai Border Patrol Police! That incident took me 24 hours to talk through, too.

*Q: You were in Chiang Mai in the early 1970s. Later on, in the late 1970s, when I was in Bangkok, there was a question about the rewards policy. This caused infinite trouble because there were people in Washington who really...*

MONTGOMERY: Didn't we have a private army on our payroll at that time?

*Q: I don't think so. Regarding the rewards policy, I thought that it was a pretty good idea. However, some people in Washington felt that it was terrible because it would lead to the production of opium, heroin, and so on, for turning over to the U.S.*

MONTGOMERY: That's the way they broke the code. [Laughter]

*Q: This caused a lot of trouble because some people said that the rewards policy amounted to rewarding sin. I thought that it wasn't rewarding sin. Otherwise, what would*

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happen to this heroin? It would wind up in the U.S., ruining the lives of Americans. Anyway, we never really got the rewards policy going.

MONTGOMERY: Well, it's essentially an insoluble problem. Rewards will have the effect of promoting the production of opium, as you will see in several more stories that I'm going to tell you. In any case, keeping the peace between the CIA and the DEA in Chiang Mai turned out to be my principal occupation. When I got to Chiang Mai, I was surprised to find out that this was the case. It's something that I pulled off with a measure of success, though obviously with a couple of glitches here and there.

When I went to Chiang Mai, the priorities that I took with me were the narcotics traffic and the communist insurgency. We were still convinced that we had a lot to tell the Thai about how to combat communist insurgents. [Laughter] This is another thing that Ambassador Martin stopped - the buildup of American advisers in Thailand similar to the buildup of American advisers in Vietnam, prior to the deployment of organized U.S. forces and with U.S. aircraft flying missions in support of the Thai forces. The man deserves a medal for that, despite the fact that he was an irascible, difficult human being. He was right on a number of occasions. General Richard Stilwell, the commander of MACTHAI, always hated Ambassador Martin for that. That's why MACTHAI was created, with the name changing from JUSMAG to the Military Assistance Command. Just as our advisory structure in Vietnam went from the MAAG (Military Assistance and Advisory Group) to MACV (Military Assistance Command - Vietnam). MACTHAI was established to accommodate a larger American presence in Thailand, but that presence never existed. Nevertheless, the MACTHAI structure remained in place, with a lot of spinning wheels, duplication, and extra expense, etc. MACTHAI never really had anything to do. They spent a lot of time fooling around, thinking up highly inappropriate military assistance programs for the Thai Army.

Let's talk about the communist insurgency. There was a detectable, visible communist insurgency in northern Thailand, centered primarily, but not exclusively, on the hill tribes.

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The leaders tended to be ethnic Thai. They were located principally near the Laotian border, in Chiang Khong District of Chiang Rai Province; in Pua District of Nan Province, also near the Laotian border; there were some communists adjacent to Burmese dissident groups in Tak Province; and finally there were some communists straddling the border between Phitsanulok and Loi Provinces. There was a "Voice of the People of Thailand" radio station transmitting from southern China, whose broadcasts would be picked up by FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service). Occasionally, I would star in those broadcasts. From time to time, and within 24 hours, they would broadcast my previous day's itinerary, which really scared the hell out of me. [Laughter] The question was, how was this information getting to Yunan Province in southern China? I don't know what these broadcasts were supposed to do, but they scared me.

*Q: As long as they didn't have your schedule for the following day.*

MONTGOMERY: [Laughter] They may have but they never broadcast it.

So the communist insurgents were present. The Thai Third Army, operating out of Phitsanulok, was deployed against them. The Third Army had a Cavalry Division, which really didn't have any horses, in Nan Province and troops operating out of Phitsanulok in Phitsanulok Province. I don't think that the Thai Third Army had anybody much in Tak Province.

The Thai Third Army struck a deal with the old Kuomintang forces in Chiang Khong District of Chiang Rai Province. This happened shortly before I arrived in Chiang Mai in June, 1971. There were two Chinese Kuomintang armies in northern Thailand. There was the Third Army up in Fang District under Gen Lao Li. Up in Chiang Rai Province there was the Fifth Chinese Army. I may have these numerical designations backwards.

The Thai Army was mangled a couple of times going after the Communist Terrorists [CTs] along the Thai-Laotian border. The Thai hired several thousand Kuomintang soldiers to go into Chiang Khong District and drive the communists back into Laos. The Thai paid them.

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It was not only a pragmatic decision to commit some presumably effective troops against the CT's and open the road that went up to the Chiang Khong valley. It was also a final symbol of the fact - I thought that it was a conclusion by the King of Thailand - that these Chinese Kuomintang troops were in Thailand to stay. You may recall that Gen. Li Mi's 49th Division in Yunan Province in China was defeated by Mao Tse Tung in 1949. They fled into northern Burma, where they were adopted by the CIA, with a view to returning to China.

*Q: This was in the early 1950s. It was done without the knowledge of the Embassy in Bangkok.*

MONTGOMERY: That's right. Everybody else knew about it, but the Embassy didn't. These troops hung around in northern Burma and then began to filter into northern Thailand in the late 1950s or early 1960s. They established themselves basically as part of the Thai "cordon sanitaire" against Burma.

I said that my initial priorities in Chiang Mai were the communist insurgency and drugs, in addition to managing the American presence in northern Thailand. The other abiding reality was the Thai-Burmese border and all of the politics that went along with that. This was something that I did not fully appreciate when I got off the train in Chiang Mai but came to learn as time went on. So the Thai Army hired these Kuomintang troops to go into action against the communists, and they were fairly effective. The Thai Army and the Thai political structure were extremely effective in pulling it off. The Thai provincial governors cooperated, they got the police and the military to cooperate. They got everybody together in the classic CPM mantra - civilians, police, and military - which George Tanham and his crowd were always trying to sell to the Thai. The Thai were never fully successful, except when they thought that it was important. They did two things. They pulled this off, and they excluded us from the operation entirely. George Tanham wrote a lot about counterinsurgency. He was Bill Stokes' predecessor as Special Assistant to the Ambassador for Counterinsurgency in the Embassy in Bangkok.

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The thing about the use of the CIF, the Chinese Irregular Forces, a euphemism for the Kuomintang, is that this illustrated a truth about the Thai military. That is, when the Thai Government, which in many ways WAS the Thai military, decided that it needed to deploy actual fighting troops with the obvious possibility that some of them would be killed, they would not use regular Thai Army units for that purpose. They would create a special unit, or find a special unit, that actually would go and do the fighting. The regular Thai Army was not to be employed in risky situations like that. Because the truth is that the Thai Army was primarily a political organization which happened to have uniforms and guns. Above the level of company, political considerations prevailed over military considerations. Below the company level a military requirement might take precedence.

When the Thai decided to join us and send troops to Vietnam, did they send a regular Thai Army unit? No, they sent a special unit, called "The Queen's Rangers." And then they formed "The King's Rifles," again, a totally volunteer unit, separate from the Thai military structure. When the Thai went into Laos, when we paid them to go into Laos against the North Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao, special units were created for that purpose once again. When the Thai wanted to attack the communists in Chiang Rai Province, they used the Chinese Irregular Forces.

The other thing that happened in the Thai counterinsurgency program when I was there was that I came to realize that Nan Province was a difficult area. There were several different units in operation against the communists. There was the Thai Army, the Border Patrol Police, and the Provincial Police. Then there was the Provincial Governor's CSOC - Communist Suppression Operations Command, which represented the governor's attempt to pull all of this together. The governor was a sort of fourth player in the counterinsurgency operation, if you will.

Over the years either USOM (United States Operations Mission) or MACTHAI had provided each of these units with perfectly capable tactical radios. We were increasingly in a situation where, a couple of kilometers down the road, a police unit might be under

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attack, while a Thai Army was sitting here, perfectly capable of getting the police out of trouble. However, the police unit couldn't get in touch with the Army unit because their radios didn't mesh. This was happening increasingly. I figured out that I could scare up enough money to build a little facility in Nan Province, put up the appropriate antennas, and put one radio of each Thai force in this little Operations Center, so that they could communicate with each other more efficiently. I sent my Vice Consul, Jim Bullington, over to discuss this idea with the Provincial Governor. I talked to the USOM people and got it all up and running. It was a modest step but, nevertheless, it made sense. The Thai Army, the Thai Police, and the Thai Border Patrol Police all said that they thought it was a good idea.

So I said, "Go ahead." And the Thai built the building. We were going to have an inaugural ceremony. The Governor of Nan Province and I were going to cut a ribbon and stuff like that. I sent Jim Bullington ahead for a final check. He came back and said, "Well, so much for that idea." He said, "It's completed, a beautiful building, a nice antenna, and nobody is using it." I said, "Hell!" Jim said, "The Thai Army said, 'Well, you can't really expect us to let the Thai Police listen in on our radio.' The Thai Police said, 'You can't really expect us to let the Provincial Governor listen in on what we have to say.'" He went around, and nobody was willing to let anybody else listen in on their radios.

It struck me at that point - and this is where I bailed out on Vietnam. You may wonder what the connection is. This is where I pulled the plug on Vietnam in my own mind. It struck me that, on any given day, in Nan Province, there was always something that was slightly more important than defeating the bad guys. Then these given days add up, until the bad guys get you. I figured that if this was true in Nan Province in northern Thailand in 1973, it was true and had been true, in spades, in Vietnam. As far as the Vietnamese political, governmental, and military systems were concerned, on any given day there always was something that was a little more important than paying the price to become a little more efficient against the Vietnamese communists. I figured, "If they can't solve their problems in Thailand, where the pressure is very limited, they aren't going to solve anything in Vietnam." And those days had been adding up and adding up. It wasn't going to change,

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and the bad guys, the communists, were eventually going to win, because our side would get tired. As they did. That sort of sums up a lot of the counterinsurgency efforts by the Americans in Thailand.

Once the Americans pulled out of Thailand after 1975, apparently the communist terrorism movement collapsed. The Thai solved this problem without our advice. However, I wasn't there for that and I can only speak from what I read in the newspapers.

Another thing that happened on the counterinsurgency front which the Embassy in Bangkok didn't want to hear came up when the King of Thailand was planning to visit Nan Province. Here was Nan Province up against the Laotian border. Here was the District Capital at Pua. What the Thai wanted to do was build a road to Pua, then over to the Laotian border, down, and over to Nan. This road would form a square. The Thai had been trying to build that road. They had a Thai Army engineering battalion trying to finish the road from Nan to Pua. They went out there to build the road, and they were shot at. They didn't like this. This was bad news. However, the King was coming, and they needed to build the road. So the Thai Third Army in Phitsanolk made a decision. They said that they were going to quit beating their heads against a wall. They were going to bribe the communists to let them build that road. So the word went out to all of the provincial governors - not just here but everywhere else that they were trying to build roads, to bribe the communists. They said, "Let's get these roads finished." And they had classes in Phitsanolk on how to bribe the communists. Ban Chop, my Political Assistant, a guy who had worked for the Consulate in Chiang Mai for years, was down in Phitsanolk one day when they were holding one of these classes. They invited him to sit in on the class. Ban Chop sat in, took notes, and came back and reported to me. I reported it to the Embassy in Bangkok. The Embassy went into orbit, because this wasn't in the scenario. Then I started calling on the governors and on the District Officer in Pua and I discussed this matter with them. They confirmed it.

*Q: It's embarrassing, but sometimes it's the only way to do it.*



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MONTGOMERY: The Thai District Officer in Pua said, "We've got to build this road, but the communists are being 'difficult' about it. We had the communist District Officer and his staff here last week. We had lunch and played soccer. We discussed the matter. I told him how much we were willing to pay them. I gave him some cash as a sign of good faith. I gave him some medicine and a sewing machine for his uniforms and stuff like that. Then the communist District Officer said that they would have to go off and consider it." The Thai District Officer said to the communists, "You know, here's the sewing machine and here's the money." The communists came back in a week and said that this was not doctrinally sound, and they couldn't do it. They couldn't be bribed.

In fact, the communists were too honest. This was happening about the same time when we were cutting our support of our private armies in Laos, as you may recall. Over in Xieng Khouang in Laos, which is due East of Pua, there was an Air America station, and we had some Thai mercenary troops there - not just hill tribesmen. We cut off their support. They had no work. About this time I called on the Governor in Chiang Rai. While I was there, I called on the commander of the Thai Cavalry Division. He said, "Come on, I want to show you something." He took me downstairs and showed me a table with dirty, bloody uniforms, some banged up rifles with blood all over them, and a cap with a hole in it. I asked him, "What is this for?" He said, "Well, I'll tell you a story. These guys are from your old base in Xieng Khouang in Laos. As you know, you cut off their support, so they were out of work. They heard that people were paying for permission to build roads here in Chiang Rai. So they decided that they might as well 'sell' some permission to build roads. They came over here to call on the Ital-Thai contractor up in Pua, thinking that they could 'sell' him permission to build the road. The contractor was suspicious. He told them to come back three nights later. He was suspicious because he knew about the soccer game, the sewing machine, and all of that. He figured that these Thais were 'free lancing.' He told us, we laid an ambush, and we shot them. This is their equipment. I thought that you'd like to know." I copied down the number on a rifle, and it checked out.

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So, this is a story that goes from counterinsurgency to bribing to free lancers who were no longer on the CIA payroll in Laos. While I'm on that subject, I was up in Chiang Rai Province at the airport, waiting for Congresswoman Bella Abzug and a Congressional Delegation to descend on me from Laos. They were coming in on a Pilatus Porter aircraft. There was a silver, unmarked C-130 aircraft there at the airport. Hanging around it was a bunch of armed Thai in camouflage fatigue uniforms. A couple of American pilots were leaning out the window of the cockpit. I went over to my driver and asked him to go over and see who those guys were. He came back and said, "Yes, I know one of those guys. He used to be a bellhop in a hotel in Phitsanolok. They're going over to Laos to fight the communists." I said, "Who are they with?" He said, "They're just fighters. Jungle fighters." I said, "Who's hiring them?" He said, "The Americans are doing it. The CIA's taking them over there." I said, "Oh, how long are they going to be here?" I was looking at my watch. He said, "Oh, probably about a couple of more hours." So I walked over and talked to the American pilot and said, "Listen, you're taking these guys East, right?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Why don't you do it now rather than later. Congresswoman Bella Abzug and several other Members of Congress are coming in here." I said, "They'll be here in about 15 minutes." He said, "Yes, Sir," and that was it. Those guys from the hotel piled into the airplane, and off they went east into Laos.

I think, as I said before, the Thai got out of this adventure in Laos remarkably unscathed. They certainly were involved in trying to frustrate North Vietnamese designs in Laos. Certainly, a lot of North Vietnamese died because of airplanes which took off from Thai soil. There's no doubt about that. The Vietnamese were right next door, but, still, they didn't do any harm to Thailand. It was certainly within their capability to do so, particularly in the initial stages, when military installations were so unprotected. They certainly could have attacked these installations in Thailand in coordination with the Tet offensive in Vietnam in 1968 and really done some serious damage. But they didn't. Once again, the Thai came out of a very difficult situation, relatively untouched, just as they did, as we discussed earlier, out of World War II.

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The other major priority in Chiang Mai was drugs. The U.S. administration had reached the decision that relief for the streets of Detroit and Chicago was to be found in the mountains and hills of northern Thailand. This was a fundamentally unsound decision. Nonetheless, it is one which is very difficult to argue with. From a political point of view, you absolutely have to try to do something about this. Once you conclude that heroin is a danger and should be stopped, you can't ignore the source of the heroin, even though, as history has proven, it is absolutely the wrong place to go, if, indeed, there is any right place to go in connection with something like this. Since the time that I was in Chiang Mai, the production of opiates in the Golden Triangle area of Thailand, Burma, and Laos has increased from 600 tons a year to 2,400 tons a year. I think that this demonstrates the efficacy of at least somebody's agricultural program.

The problem with finding a substitute crop for opium poppies is that poppies are the ideal substitute crop. It is a high value crop, easy to produce, easy to transport, and so forth.

There we were in the Golden Triangle. We were going to try to stop the flow of drugs. To that end we had CIA and DEA detachments. The DEA was beginning its presence there. The DEA chief was Jim Petit. I forget the name of the other guy. They had never been outside of the United States before. They had very little idea of how to operate in a society like Thailand's. Much to their consternation, they found themselves dependent on the good graces and indulgence of the CIA, which had contacts and was able to pinpoint certain aspects of the opium traffic and, indeed, to think in terms of action against it.

One of the first big successes began when a Thai Police Major came in to the DEA or to the CIA - I forget which. He offered to turn an opium shipment. In return he wanted \$50,000 and a visa to the United States. So we agreed to give it to him. He did. He turned in a shipment.

*Q: You had to report this to Washington to get authorization.*

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MONTGOMERY: It was done through other channels - that is, other than the Consulate. This worked. He fingered a Caltex [California-Texas Oil Company] truck, apparently loaded with oil. The bottom half of the truck was phony. It was filled with several tons of opium. We gave him his \$50,000 and his visa to the United States. We trumpeted this seizure of opium, which was locked up in a jail cell. One of my CIA buddies quietly pointed out to me a couple of days later, after we had finished congratulating ourselves, that we could have bought the same quantity of opium on the open market for \$30,000. [Laughter] So much for the reward problem we were talking about earlier.

It never got much beyond that type of episodic seizure, at least whel was there.

*Q: It never did.*

MONTGOMERY: One year we got our hands on something like 25 tons of opium. No Foreign Service post will ever get as much as that again. That is the equivalent of 2.5 or 3.0 tons of heroin, after refining. In the United States the police get a promotion if they seize three ounces of heroin. So we got 25 tons of opium, and another 375 tons slipped through.

*Q: The average annual seizure during the years I was in Bangkok, 197to 1979, came to about 10 percent of the estimated movement.*

MONTGOMERY: If that.

*Q: Well, that was an average. The drug smuggling organizations coulafford to give us 10 percent, just to keep us happy.*

MONTGOMERY: Sure, given the price margins. When I was in Chiang Mai, you could buy a kilo of pure heroin for \$1,000 on the Thai-Burmese border. You could sell it for \$2,000 in Chiang Mai, take it to Bangkok and sell it for \$5,000, strap it under your Brooks Brothers suit and sell it wholesale in San Francisco for \$35,000.

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Q: I always thought that as long as the rewards price was below the market price, we were doing well. However, we should not put the rewards price above the market price, because that's just crazy. However, there were these people in the United States Government in Washington who felt that it was immoral to reward sin. Therefore, they were opposed to the whole rewards policy, no matter what the price.

MONTGOMERY: It probably would not have made a significant difference, because the drug trafficking organizations had lots of heroin. Several years later they had four times as much as they did at the time I left, for heaven's sake.

Another interesting exercise occurred when Gen. Kriangsak came to us. Kriangsak was not only the Supreme Command person in charge of the American presence in Thailand and negotiations with us. He was also a Marcher Lord of some proportions in northern Thailand. He was in charge of dealing with some, but not all, of the ethnic groups.

Q: *What's a Marcher Lord?*

MONTGOMERY: He was a Marcher Lord in that he watched the border between northern Thailand and Burma, much as William the Conqueror watched the borderlands between England and Wales - the March area. The Thai tend not to look at a border as a single line on the map. They don't think in terms of a single line. They think in terms of a zone. Things went on in Kriangsak's zone that don't go on in the lowlands of Thailand. So in this zone Kriangsak had some responsibilities with the Kuomintang forces. I would say that, probably, he was one of the intellectual engines behind the decision to assimilate them into Thai society. He was certainly behind the decision to hire them to go to Chiang Rai and fight the CT, or Communist Terrorists. Kriangsak contacted the Americans in Bangkok - I was in Chiang Mai at the time. He said, "Look, I've been talking to the Kuomintang forces. They are prepared to get out of the opium business. They understand that the time for that is past. They understand that they need to settle down and become 'honest farmers.'" Some of the Kuomintang people were getting older. By this time they had

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become almost a separate hill tribe themselves, in many ways, although armed to the teeth. He said, "Their problem is that they put up \$1.0 million for this year's opium crop. They need that \$1.0 million back. If you Americans come up with a million dollars, they will turn over 20 tons of opium which they were going to buy. You can do whatever you want with it."

We mulled this over, and it was too good to refuse. We agreed to do this. Arrangements were made in Bangkok. The Embassy didn't want to tell us about it - it was too sensitive and too secret. Of course, there are no secrets in northern Thailand, so we knew all about it from the contacts Ban Chop, our Political Assistant, had in the hills. They kept us fully informed on these negotiations. The day agreed upon came, and the Kuomintang forces came out of the woods with 20 tons of opium. They turned this over to the Thai Supreme Command and stacked it up on a farm where the Thai Army raised mules on the northern side of Chiang Mai. The Thai Army burned it. They invited a bunch of newspaper reporters to see it burned. The Thai Army got the million dollars from the U.S. and turned it over to the Kuomintang generals. As far as I know, what the Kuomintang did was to bring the opium up to the Thai frontier. The opium traders would have to cross 10 yards or so into Burma, pick it up, and bring it into Thailand. They lived up to the letter of the agreement.

The interesting part of it was that, after this triumph that we didn't want to acknowledge, the cover story was that the United Nations had done this.

*Q: Poor UN!*

MONTGOMERY: I was at a birthday party of the Thai Army's Seventh Regimental Combat Team - a black tie affair. The Chief of the Provincial Police came up to me and said, "Mr. Consul, I hear that you guys are buying opium." I said, "Well, we don't buy opium. That just encourages the production of more opium." He said, "Well, I understand what you're saying, but, you know, you paid too much for that opium that you bought from the Kuomintang. If you want to do it again and give me the same amount of money, I'll bring

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you twice as much opium!" [Laughter] I'm sure that I would have had it in my front yard within a week!

*Q: We have great difficulty in dealing with problems like these.*

MONTGOMERY: Another incident of some interest involved THE major opium dealer in the Golden Triangle, Lo Hsi Haan, who had that heroin refinery that we didn't blow up, across the river from Thailand. Lo was the leader of an armed group called the Kak Kwai Ai. This was a Burmese term, meaning Self-Defense Group. This was a name which the Burmese Army assigned to a number of the private armies in Burma which ostensibly agreed to cooperate with the Rangoon authorities against the BCP, the Burmese Communist Party. In return for his cooperation against the Burmese Communist Party he was given certain franchises in the opium business. With these franchises he purchased opium and became a big dealer in it. He moved a lot of it through Thailand. He was of mixed Chinese and Shan ancestry and had lived in Terry and the Pirates country for his whole life.

For reasons I don't fully understand, involving some pressure from the United States and internal Burmese politics, the Burmese Government revoked his Kak Kwai Ai license and his opium franchise. In a fit of pique he announced that he had become a freedom fighter and that his troops would work to overthrow the tyrants in Rangoon. At that point the Burmese authorities became rather angry. They started after Lo Hsi Haan with contingents of the Burmese Army. So Lo Hsi Haan began to work his way out of northern Burma, down to the Salween River, and across to Mai Hong Song.

We were able to follow his progress - let me put it that way. We knew when he was getting close to the Thai border and that he was planning to cross it. We were a little puzzled as to why he was doing this. We were working with the Thai Border Patrol Police at the time and were keeping them informed. They were getting ready to grab him. The day came when we knew that he was going to cross into Thailand within several hours. The Border

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Patrol Police went off and stationed themselves on the only path leading out of Burma at that point, and Lo and a couple of his followers, unarmed, came smiling down the trail. The Border Patrol Police stepped out, and Lo greeted them like long lost buddies. Then they put handcuffs on him and took him away. Clearly, this was dirty pool that was being played.

Some of our people from Bangkok were sent up to Mae Ream, where he was being held, to interrogate him. Mae Ream was the BPP Headquarters North of Chiang Mai. At that point Bill Young came to see me. The Young family were missionaries in Burma before World War II. They were kicked out of Burma when the Burmese Government kicked out all missionaries in the 1950s. They moved to Chiang Mai and went into various businesses. I think that they continued some of their missionary activities. The father of the family opened the Chiang Mai zoo, for instance, and Ruth Young was a good friend of my wife, Deedee. They were very unusual leftovers in a time warp, as it were. Bill Young went into business for himself. Basically, he became a gun runner. He was involved in that whole situation along the march area between Thailand and Burma.

Bill Young said to me, "Did you hear that the BPP has Lo Hsi Haan?" I said, "No kidding." He said, "Yes, there's a Thai Army captain up here from Thai Supreme Command, and he is 'furious.' He is trying to get Lo released." I said, "Why?" He said, "Supreme Command had given Lo a 'safe conduct pass.' They wanted to talk to him. And then the damned Border Patrol Police arrested him. He was double crossed!"

I reported this to the Embassy in Bangkok, but our people there tended to discount what Bill Young said because he was a rather raffish fellow. You know, Lo Hsi Haan had 5,000 men, and they were over in the next valley, in Burma. And the word came down that they were coming across the mountains to get the Governor of Chiang Rai province and me and hold us hostage for Lo's release. I took this seriously. The Thai packed Lo up and sent him down to Bangkok, which made kidnaping the Governor and me less likely. Then the Thai entered into negotiations with the Burmese to turn Lo over. The Burmese put Lo on



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trial. They would bring him out for a day's testimony, during which he would implicate a certain number of Burmese officials, and then they would lock him up again. The Burmese finally let him go. As far as I know, he's back in business.

However, an interesting sequel to all of this came in 1989, when Deeded and I were in London. We were staying at the Seagram Town House. Seagram's, for which I work as a consultant, has a town house in London where visitors can stay. We were sitting in the lounge having a drink and watching TV. A show came on, called, "The Opium Lords." It had been shot by several British TV cameramen who, in 1973, had been with Lo Hsi Haan in Burma. They were with him when he crossed the Salween River and headed toward Thailand. They had footage of him walking into Thailand to have his meeting with a representative of Thai Supreme Command. They talked about his safe conduct pass as he was shown on the TV screen, crossing the river into Thailand. Here we were, watching it, 16 years later. Then, the next footage showed them on the following day, milling around and cursing the Thai for having snatched Lo Hsi Haan and taken him away in handcuffs. There was confirmation of Bill Young's story! Needless to say, I almost fell on the floor! Lo Hsi Haan was the biggest opium dealer in the world! His arrest didn't do a damned thing to the flow of opium. I sent Ban Chop, my Political Assistant, to survey all of the other dissident opium groups. He came back and said that they had commented, "Well, it's too bad about Lo, but we'll keep the opium moving."

Q: What about Khun Sa? Wasn't he also a big opium dealer?

MONTGOMERY: I think that Khun Sa used to be called Chiang Chi Fu. I think that Khun Sa is a title, rather than a name. There was another Khun Sa when I was in Chiang Mai. He used to send me Christmas cards. The cards would say, "Merry Christmas. May your wisdom equal your strength." [Laughter] He used to send me maps showing the caravan routes used by rivals in the opium traffic, for us to use and snatch them, which we would do. The maps were good. We would give them to the Border Patrol Police, and they would go and get them. It worked very well. This Khun Sa had a town house in Chiang Mai,

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across the street from one of my Vice Consuls. The name of this man was Khun Sa, but he was not Chiang Chi Fu. So I think that Khun Sa is a name for the chief opium trafficker.

*Q: I've seen alleged pictures of him, but they may all be confirminthe same photograph. It may not have reference to anything.*

MONTGOMERY: Now this brings us to talk about the dominant reality, the Thai- Burmese border, or the March. The Thai look upon the Burmese as their principal enemy in the world. You may think that that is crazy, but look at the way we think about Fidel Castro. How could we possibly think of Castro as a threat to the United States? I was having dinner at the Royal Palace in Bangkok once, where the King and Queen of Thailand were present. I was standing in line with Ambassador Unger. The King and Queen were going down the line. I greeted the King while the Queen was greeting Ambassador Unger. She said to Ambassador Unger, "You Americans must remember that our principal enemies are the Burmese."

In any case, there were all of these groups along the border. In varying degrees they were in rebellion against the Burmese Government in Rangoon. I say, "varying degrees," because some of them had been in rebellion for so long that they had almost forgotten about it! They were really arms merchants. The Thai looked upon all of these groups with favor, as their protection, their shield and buckler against Burmese aggression along this vulnerable strip of their frontier. The Thai didn't give these groups a lot of money, or anything like that. However, they maintained contact and pursued a policy that I came to call, facilitative acquiescence. The Thai acquiesced in what these groups did and were helpful to them, from time to time, in what they did. Through this liaison arrangement the Thai kept informed on what was going on.

There was a kind of political game played between the various groups which was like the shifting politics of an Italian Renaissance city. You can't understand the opium problem of Thailand if you don't understand these groups. I didn't realize that until Ban Chop, my

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Political Assistant, took me by the hand through it all. I prepared a directory which is now available as a public document. It's called, "The Armed Groups of Northern Thailand Not Under the Control of the Thai Government or the Communists." I left those other groups out of the list.

In this directory I started from Tachilek and Mae Sai in the North and worked down to Tak. I think that I listed 17 separate, identifiable, discrete armed units. That included two CIF-Kuomintang armies. It included a unit controlled by the IBMND, the Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of National Defense in Taiwan. They had several thousand armed men, up in Chiang Rai province. Their liaison officer lived in Chiang Mai, and his son was a friend of my son, Darrow. There were several different Shan armies. The Karen had several armies. There was the Kachin Independence Army. There was the Lahu United Liberation Movement, or LULU. There was a Chin group and another group involving the ethnic Burmans themselves. The Kareni had another unit. Obviously, there were some I've forgotten. I haven't looked at that directory for 20 years.

All of these guys were up there. The way they made their living was that they would mount up caravans of 500-700 horses and mules, load them with consumer goods, basically from the Chiang Mai market, and give them an escort of 1,000 to 1,500 well-armed men, with the latest weaponry. They would fight, sell, trade, and negotiate their way into northern Burma over a period of several months, all the way to the northern Kachin States - selling their merchandise and buying. Then they would come back down to Thailand with opium, gems, antiques, precious woods, and raw jade - large chunks of it, which was one of the major commodities they obtained in trade. Down closer to Thailand they would bring across old teak logs, cattle, pigs, and tungsten ore. Man, this wasn't smuggling. This was international commerce!

They would sell anything. An opium caravan might also be another kind of caravan. Some of them had political pretensions. Now, the IBMND clearly had long ago given up the idea of slashing into the soft underbelly of Communist China and that kind of thing. There was

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also another IBMND unit which used the cover story that they were sub- contracted to our guys. They ran a listening station in Lampang Province which followed radio broadcasts in southern China. They said that they were working for the CIA, but they weren't - they were working for themselves. So there was this whole hodge-podge of things going on. And opium was a part of its life's blood. The Burmese authorities hated these groups, for obvious reasons. On a very official level, I was unable to be in touch with them. This just wasn't done. However, we also wanted to know what was going on. So that was the genius of Ban Chop, my Political Assistant, who was then in his 60s. He had been with the Consulate in Chiang Mai since it reopened after World War II. Ban Chop knew everybody. He had grown up in northern Thailand, had gone to Prince Royal College, a missionary school in Chiang Mai which graduated many of the upper crust of northern Thailand. Ban Chop had gone to school with a lot of these dissident leaders.

When we wanted to find things out, I would ask him, and he would do what he called going bump. He would say, "I'll go bump." He would go down to the coffee shops in Chiang Mai where, he knew, some of these guys used to hang out. He would sit there, these guys would come in, and they would have an accidental meeting, where they could exchange information. The convention that I inherited from my predecessors as Consul was that this was okay. These people would not look upon this kind of contact as official recognition by the American Consul. This was a way to keep communications open, which, obviously, was necessary, since these guys played a role in the overall situation. Ban Chop would do this.

One day Ban Chop was late for work. He came in and said, "I'm sorry that I'm late, but General Li's son came by to call on me." I said, "What did he want?" Ban Chop said, "Well, he's got a problem. He just got back from Lincoln, Nebraska, where he graduated from school. He's having a fight with his father. His father wants him to take over the army. He doesn't want to take over the army. He wants to open a Toyota agency! He said, 'What do I know about armies?'" Ban Chop had this whole set of relationships. He knew

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these guys and could keep track of what was happening. It was a very delicate, very Thai arrangement - and extremely effective.

I would ask, "What do these guys think about the capture of Lo Hsi Haan?" So off to the coffee shops went Ban Chop. He came back with a good account of what the opinion was in that part of Thailand. Every time we were talking about mucking up the opium trade, we were talking about mucking up this complex of relationships. This never really became a problem because we never really got that good at it. It took just as much effort to penetrate a 10 kilogram conspiracy as a 100 kilogram conspiracy. They were just as hard to do. The profit margins were such that the traffickers might say, "Well, we'll move 10 shipments instead of one." This was no problem. They could do it. The money was there.

I remember one time that Congressman Lester Wolff [Democrat, New York] came to visit us. The Thai did a number on him. He was talking with a Thai Police officer who was making \$100 a month. He would say stupid things like, "We're really counting on you because we have to keep narcotics out of the United States. It's really very expensive there." Then Congressman Wolff decided that he wanted to buy some jewels. The Thai Police said that they would help him. They took him up to Mae Sai, where he went down the street to the Bata shoe store, whose owner is one of the biggest opium dealers in the world. So there was Congressman Lester Wolff and the biggest opium dealer in the world going into the back room of the Bata shoe store to have a private conversation and buy some jewels! The Thai really ragged me about that! They just kept a straight face and said to Wolff, "Oh, aren't those jewels nice."

On this occasion we were standing there at this bridge in Mae Sai, with Burma on the other side of the river. We didn't cross the bridge. We walked down about 200 yards from the bridge along the river. There was a rustling sound in the bushes. Four guys came out with four automobile tires hanging from bamboo poles. They splashed across the river into Burma. I asked the Thai policeman, "Did you see that?" He said, "Yes. It involves a car, I think." Then, sure enough, there was more rustling in the bushes, and an engine block

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was carried out and then across the river, splash, splash, splash. I said, "Well, why don't they just cross the bridge?" He said, "Why, the Burmese police would arrest them if they did that!"

So this was the situation that we were dealing with. We had a guy whose name was Gross. He was one of the early Coordinators for Narcotics in the Department of State. I say this with some reservations, because I may not have remembered the name correctly. I think that he was a prosecutor in northern New Jersey. He came down to Washington and talked to some of the CIA people. He said that we should find out the names of the chemists who processed opium into heroin, assassinate them, and be done with it. The reaction on the part of my friends was really marvelous to behold. They were wondering, "Who is this guy? Does he really think that we're going to go out and assassinate people?" Eventually, Mr. Gross wound up being indicted for jury tampering, or something like that.

There was one issue on which I demanded that one of my telegrams be sent to Washington, which the Embassy in Bangkok did. This concerned the decision to provide helicopters and other forms of military assistance to the Burmese. I thought that it was a snare and a delusion that this was going to help the narcotics situation in any way. I thought that it was going to put us on the slippery slope to involvement in an insurgency in Burma. Frankly, the provision of this equipment was designed to help the Burmese Government operate against these dissident units I have mentioned. Some of the dissidents were not involved in opium smuggling at this time, such as the Karens, against whom the helicopters would be used, because they most directly threatened the Burmese Government. I argued very vehemently against providing these helicopters to the Burmese, almost as a matter of conscience, as this could get us involved in the Burmese civil war. I said that we would find that this conflict in Burma was infinitely more complicated than anything that we did in Vietnam. I lost, in the sense that the helicopters were provided to the Burmese. However, I won in the sense that it didn't have much of an

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effect, so nobody really got mad about it. The Burmese were continually pulling the wool over the eyes of the Americans.

I remember at one time reading two separate CIA reports out of Rangoon. One of them, in effect, praised the Burmese for having seized about 10 tons of opium in northern Burma. This reportedly showed that cooperation with the Burmese works. About six weeks later there was another CIA report from Rangoon stating that the Burmese Government's morphine and opium pharmaceutical facility in Rangoon had to shut down because they weren't making any seizures of opium and had no opium to run through this processing facility. I sent a telegram, asking about the 10 tons of opium that had been reportedly seized. Nobody replied to my telegram, needless to say. The narcotics issue is exceedingly complex. Whatever approach you take, whether decriminalization or the present policy, has a price. Prohibition of alcoholic beverages in the 1920s and 1930s carried a heavy price. We ended prohibition because the price was too high. That does not mean that we do not pay a price now for having alcohol freely available in the United States. I think that most people now would say that the price is less than the price we were paying for prohibition of alcohol.

After I left Chiang Mai I had a discussion with Sheldon Vance, then the Coordinator for Narcotics in the State Department. I told him, "Look, after having presided over some of the biggest opium seizures, literally, in the history of the world, and done this and that, I can say with some authority and credibility that trying to solve the problems in the streets of the United States in the hills of northern Thailand is like trying to fix a leaking water faucet in the State Department toilet down the hall by bailing out the MacArthur Boulevard water reservoir with a teacup." I think that this was a very useful analogy. I was never called upon for further counsel on the subject.

Q: I think you put it very well. The tragic aspect is that, despite all of our efforts - and we've had a major anti-narcotics effort under way since the 1970s - the results have been insignificant.

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MONTGOMERY: If we have a war on drugs, drugs have clearly won. Basically, opium is cheap. So it may cost 10 times what aspirin costs, so what? You end up with incredible results, like the problem of the jail population. The majority of assault and burglary cases are drug-related. There is so much nonsense spread about drug use. Alcohol kills more people every year than drugs, and so does tobacco.

When I was still working full-time for Seagram's, after I retired, I had a discussion with a man from R. J. Reynolds, the tobacco company. He said to me, "You guys in the liquor business should be grateful to us guys in the tobacco business because we're taking all of the abuse, all of the heat." I said, "No, you've got it wrong. You guys in the tobacco business should be grateful to us guys in the liquor business because if it weren't for our experience, you would be facing prohibition of tobacco products right now." He said, "You know, you're absolutely right." Q: Discussion of Thailand is endlessly fascinating, but is there anything further about Chiang Mai that you would like to go into at this point?

MONTGOMERY: No, it's just a sort of nostalgic comment in a way, but I don't think that opportunities like this are going to come very often to young or middle grade Foreign Service Officers. I think that I was uniquely privileged to have had this opportunity to live and serve in Chiang Mai and to represent the United States there. I would like to get across, in some way, just how zany, scary, and endlessly fascinating this was. I imagine that somebody more talented with the pen than I could probably do more justice to it.

Q: You've done pretty well. Jim, I have on this list of your assignments that you next went to the Soviet desk in the Department. How did that come about?

MONTGOMERY: It came about because Secretary of State Henry Kissinger instituted a policy which was called GLOP, or Global Perspectives.

Q: Ah, you were GLOPed. I was almost GLOPed. For the benefit of readers well into the future, it may be worth mentioning that Kissinger attended a Chiefs of Mission meeting in



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Mexico City in about 1974. He was very much upset when he realized that the American Ambassadors at that meeting, most of whom had spent the largest part of their careers in Latin America, appeared to know or care very little about the problems of the rest of the world. So he issued something like an imperial ukase that Foreign Service Officers, whatever their grade, who had spent many years in one area of the world would forthwith be transferred to another part of the world and that orders to this effect would be issued within the following three weeks! I was assigned to Canberra as Political Counselor at the time, after something like nine years or so in Southeast Asia and six more years working on Southeast Asia in the Department. The DCM in Canberra at the time, Bill Harrop, later Ambassador to several African countries and to Israel, stopped by our house the day the Embassy in Canberra received the telegram containing this ukase from Secretary Kissinger to warn me that I appeared to be likely to be GLOPed. As I was in Canberra, maybe people in the Department handling this program felt that I had already been GLOPed and so nothing happened to me. I completed my tour in Australia in 1975 and was then direct transferred back to Southeast Asia as Political Counselor in Bangkok. Of course, by then Kissinger was out of office, and this dumb program simply died on the vine. This whole business was quite stupid and was a sign of Kissinger at his worst.

MONTGOMERY: Well, anyway, I counted my time on the Soviet desk at best as being a tolerated or even a perfectly and politely accepted guest in a monastery. I was clearly not one of the brethren of Eastern European specialists. I did not speak Russian. I had not spent years in Moscow.

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Q: Today is August 12, 1996. Jim, would you describe how the assignment to the Soviet desk came about. You said that you were GLOPed.

MONTGOMERY: I was GLOPed. I was the object of some of Secretary Kissinger's ire at Foreign Service Officers who served for what he considered too long in one area

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and did not think about the real issues in the world, as Kissinger defined them. By July, 1974, I had spent six years in Thailand, following a long stint (1960 to 1964) on Vietnam affairs in Saigon and in the Department. After my service in Chiang Mai I was offered the position of Deputy Chief of the Political Section in Saigon. I was given the choice on that assignment but decided, at the last minute, not to go. Instead, I was assigned to the Bureau of European Affairs on the Soviet desk. I showed up there for duty in September, 1974.

Q: Were you given any idea of why the Soviet desk - and not any other desk?

MONTGOMERY: It was pure functionality. That's where the opening was. Nothing more interesting than that. As I said previously, I felt that I was politely treated on the Soviet desk as if I were a guest at a monastery - the Soviet monastery, if you will. I wasn't a brother, I hadn't learned to speak Russian. I hadn't spent time in Moscow. Consequently, I just wasn't a member of the club.

I worked in a sub-office of the Soviet desk on international policy. I dealt with things like the Indian Ocean, or what have you. It really wasn't very much of a job. It was remarkably dull, considering that this job dealt with the only nation in the world that had the power to destroy the United States. I thought that things would be a little zestier than they were, but things were remarkably deadlocked. We were in the process of seeing detente come apart. The trade agreement being negotiated with the Soviet Union was going down the tubes. We had the Jackson-Vanik amendment which virtually precluded the concession of most favored nation status to the Soviet Union unless it not only did things that it didn't want to do but was willing to admit publicly that it was doing those things. It was the latter consideration that really did in the trade agreement.

Q: *Remind me of this. Who was the Soviet leader? Was it Brezhnev?*

MONTGOMERY: It was Brezhnev.

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Q: I might mention that the Jackson-Vanik amendment was a rider to an appropriations bill which provided that most favored nation status could not be accorded to the Soviet Union unless it allowed Soviet Jews to emigrate freely to other countries.

MONTGOMERY: So the Soviet desk was a very stodgy place. I didn't have to work long hours. In fact, I had trouble filling in the normal hours. [Laughter] It really was. I filled in my time by reading the FBIS [Foreign Broadcast Information Service] reports of Soviet radio and television programs monitored by the U.S. and Britain. I don't know whether you've read FBIS reports from the Soviet Union or not, but it's some of the world's most soporific material.

It really wasn't a very challenging assignment. After three fairly intensive years in northern Thailand, where I ran my own show, had my own airplane, and so forth, I felt decompression. I felt physically ill. I had to go to the doctor, who said that I was having psychological problems - because I was no longer king of northern Thailand. [Laughter] Once he told me that, my physical problems disappeared. He was absolutely right. He said, "Get over it. You can't be 'king' all the time."

So I settled down. I began to look around and observed some things which I found to be extremely interesting. First, there seemed to be an incredible lack of information as to why the Soviet Union did things as it did. For instance, there was one sentence that Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko had uttered at a reception at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, over a year before I arrived on the Soviet desk. This remark had to do with Soviet policy in one form or another. I forget what that sentence said, but it was used for two years in memoranda about the Soviet Union - because it was the only authoritative statement that the people on the desk had. Nobody told them anything. This compared to the situation in Thailand, where you got more information than you could possibly use. In Thailand people would line up outside your door to give you information. Officers assigned to the Soviet desk used this statement over and over again, and they paid attention to public

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statements. For somebody who had served in Southeast Asia, it took a long time to get used to the idea that you pay attention to a public statement by a government.

Q: I remember the way people were lined up on top of Lenin's tomb for May Day or November 7, the anniversary of the so-called "October Revolution," was regarded as significant.

MONTGOMERY: It was a very theological exercise. There was a lot of exegesis and obscure mumblings. I did not find the Soviet desk a congenial place to be for that reason. I received one assignment while I was there which was quite interesting. My friend, Bill Dyass, was a Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. Maybe he was an Office Director. Anyhow, he was in a position of authority. He was a Soviet specialist.

Secretary of State Kissinger had worked a deal on a spy swap. The Soviets had arrested an American - I forget who he was. I think he was a businessman. The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] had arrested a Soviet national whose name was Ivanov who really didn't have diplomatic immunity. The deal was that if the Soviets released the American, we would let Ivanov out on bail - wink, wink, nudge, nudge. So we let Ivanov out on bail and, needless to say, he jumped his bail. This matter had to be wrapped up with the presiding judge in the U.S. Of course, the real motivations and the real deals were not in the documents. I was put in charge of researching the whole issue and getting it in a form where one of the European Bureau people could go to the judge and get the situation straightened out and off the books. The judge was ordering the Department to ask the Soviets to give Ivanov back. This was, of course, a ridiculous proposition. So I worked on that.

The Department was organized in a rather strange fashion in terms of things Soviet and things arms control. These matters were really in the hands of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. His lieutenant, his de facto under secretary for Europe, and particularly Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, as well as arms control issues was Helmut ["Hal"]

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Sonnenfeldt. He was the Counselor of the Department. He had worked in INR [Bureau of Intelligence Research] for many years. He went with Kissinger into the National Security Council and, when Kissinger came over to the Department of State, Hal was made Counselor of the Department and given the European and arms control portfolios.

My buddy, John Kelly, whom I met in Bangkok, was working for Sonnenfeldt. One of Hal's special assistants got sick. John Kelly asked me if I would be interested in the job. I said, "Yes," and so I went to work for Sonnenfeldt as one of his special assistants. This was early in 1976. This was an assignment where I got to make some decisions and do things. I didn't have to speak Russian to do it. I didn't even have to feel bad about not being able to speak Russian. Sonnenfeldt spoke Russian, but he was a naturalized citizen, born in Germany in 1926, as his name suggests. He was a civil servant, not a Foreign Service Officer. He was a rough, rough guy.

On his staff I was given Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and non-nuclear arms issues. Basically, the European Bureau wasn't allowed to do anything of major significance, without Sonnenfeldt's substantive approval.

*Q: Who was the Assistant Secretary of European Affairs at the time?*

MONTGOMERY: Arthur Hartman. Sonnenfeldt had a very long reach in the Department for a very simple reason. He had three or four special assistants, each of whom had a piece of his empire. We were his gauleiters. He made us learn how to sign his initials, a practice of which I am now somewhat ashamed. We listened in on many of his phone conversations so that we could take action. This used that special white pin which you pull up, and it cuts out the speaker. He backed us up fully - very un State Department. Consequently, through us, he was able to control a fairly large swatch of territory, because he had these deputies in whom he had full confidence. We were able to get a few things done. I am trying to think of where we might have touched history.

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I think this is going to be sort of ironic. You may recall the disastrous debate that Jimmy Carter had with President Gerald Ford during the presidential election campaign of 1976. This had to do with the so-called "Sonnenfeldt doctrine." Late in 1975 Sonnenfeldt attended a Chiefs of Mission meeting in Europe. During the course of his remarks at the meeting he commented on the fact that the Soviet Union did not have an organic relationship with Eastern Europe, as we had with Western Europe, and that the Soviets had never been able really to establish relations of trust and confidence. It was always a relationship of master and subordinate. That was one of the reasons that the situation was so unstable and difficult in Eastern Europe.

Somebody reported that in a telegram and someone else leaked it to Evans and Novak, the columnists. Do you remember the "Ems Telegram" story of Bismarck? They did an Ems number on some of the punctuation in the telegram. As it came out, it appeared that Sonnenfeldt was bemoaning the fact that the Soviet Union didn't have an organic relationship with Eastern Europe. He was pictured as seeming to advocate such a relationship. If the Soviets had done so, it would have been easier for everyone, including the United States, and it was suggested that this was something that the United States wanted to have happen. This version of events became known as the "Sonnenfeldt Doctrine." This was absolutely wrong. It was not what Sonnenfeldt said, and this was certainly not the way he behaved.

Anyhow, that's the way life is in the big city. It became a controversy which found its way into the 1976 presidential election campaign. I remember drafting a response on a question related to the so-called "Sonnenfeldt Doctrine," to send over to the White House, in preparation for the debate between President Ford and Jimmy Carter in the fall of 1976.

I remember at the time when President Ford made that statement, I think that the statement I had drafted for him was three lines long. He left out a line. I think that was why he lost the election of 1976.

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Q: I think that you're right. Prior to that point President Ford had almost drawn level with Carter in the opinion polls. After that debate the polls showed that President Ford dropped sharply.

MONTGOMERY: Ford lost the state of Ohio.

Q: As I recall it, the problem was that President Ford said that Poland was not a Soviet satellite. Properly stated, this could be handled, in the sense that the existing relationship between Poland and the Soviet Union did not represent the view of the Polish people. I think that this was probably true, as it clearly was seen to be true some 10 years later.

MONTGOMERY: The purpose of the suggested answer I gave him was perfectly appropriate. There was nothing wrong with it. President Ford just didn't use the whole answer. He garbled it.

Q: I remember that Edwin Newman, one of the journalists asking the questions, seemed to feel that President Ford had gotten a negative out of place. He gave President Ford three opportunities to answer this question.

MONTGOMERY: I think that it may have been a negative that he got out of place. However, he blew it, he garbled it, and then he wouldn't back down. And he wouldn't back down the next day, either. This may have been one of my brushes with history when I was working for Sonnenfeldt.

The other one was an exercise which I ran. It was a perfect mix of ethnic American politics and foreign policy. That's how I wound up with a lucrative job with the Seagram Company, of all things. In the early spring of 1976 things were getting difficult for Jews in the Soviet Union, in part because of the Jackson-Vanik amendment. The Soviets were being tough on the Jews, not that they were ever not tough on them or did not behave in a reprehensible way toward them. The Soviets had gotten a group of Jews in New York

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so annoyed with them that these Jews started taking pot shots at Soviet diplomats in New York and generally harassing them. It was getting dangerous.

*Q: This involved a group led by Meir Kahane?*

MONTGOMERY: More extreme than he was. The Soviets were beginning to retaliate against American diplomats in what was then called Leningrad [now St. Petersburg again] and Moscow. This clearly had to stop - for practical reasons. So Sonnenfeldt called me in and said, "These crazy Jews in New York are taking shots at the Soviets. Go make them stop." That's the way he used to give us instructions. I said, "I'll certainly do my best. Do you have any ideas of how I might get started?" He said, "Yes, go see [Rabbi] Arthur Herzberg, the President of the American Jewish Congress." So I went to see Herzberg. He said, "Look, I can issue a statement condemning this and get the presidents of all of the major Jewish organizations to join me. However, it won't do any good. We're the city fathers, and these guys are beyond organized Jewish political life in this country." Mel Levitsky was with me at the time. He worked on the Soviet desk in the Department. Herzberg said, "I want you to go to New York and talk to a guy that I know who probably knows about these people or knows who they are and what their motivations are. He might be able to come up with something useful. The guy's name is Israel Singer. Israel's involved in the World Jewish Congress. He teaches political science at Brooklyn College. He's a rabbi and a retired stockbroker." Singer had made lots of money on the stock market and then retired. He was also an attorney. He is a very capable man, is interested in American Jewish politics, and knows a lot of people.

So we went up to New York to see Israel Singer and had a long talk with him. He said, "My belief is that the people who are shooting at Soviet diplomats are Holocaust survivors or children of Holocaust survivors. They are truly in the 'never again' group. They won't listen to anything that the Jewish 'establishment' says. However, I think that I know somebody who can get to them, so come back and see me in a week."



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I later got a call from Israel Singer. He said, "Meet me on Bleeker Street in New York. We're going to see a man" down on the Lower East Side of New York. We went there to the headquarters of Agudath Israel of America. Now, Agudath Israel is affiliated with the Agudath Party in Israel. It is an orthodox, charitable, political, social, economic development organization based on the Sephardic Jewish community in New York. Most of them wear black hats and big black beards. They are really not a part of Main Street Jewish life. However, they are well informed on matters related to the Orthodox Jewish community. Singer took me to see [Rabbi] Moses Sherer, who was the president of Agudath Israel of America.

I told Moses this story. I said, "What do we need to do to make these shootings of Soviet diplomats stop?" Moses said, "Well, the only group that these people might pay attention to is the Council of Torah Sages. Insofar as Jewry has a Papacy, this is it. The Council of Torah Sages passes on doctrinal issues. They are mainly presidents or deans in various Orthodox Jewish seminaries across the U.S. They are scholars. I think that I could talk to them and get them to consider the proposition that shooting Soviet diplomats is contrary to Torah law. I'll be happy to do that."

I said, "Great." Then he said, "You've got to help me." I said, "What do you need?" He said, "Well, we've got a problem. What we Jews do every year around Passover is to send, not only from Agudath here but Agudath in Europe as well, truly Kosher matzoh, or unleavened bread, which is eaten by Jews on the feast of Passover. We send this matzoh into the Soviet Union, so that the truly religious Jews there can have the proper matzoh, because none of the matzoh baked in the Soviet Union is really 'kosher' for an Orthodox Jew. In the past the Soviet Union has been letting this matzoh in, but this year they've held it up in the post office. Will you 'get it out?'" I said, "I can't guarantee a thing, but I'll do my best." So Moses said, "Fine. That's all I need. I will take care of this other matter for you."

So I went downstairs, got on a pay phone, called Sonnenfeldt, and said, "We've got to move some matzoh." I told him the story. He said, "We'll go see Henry Kissinger

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tomorrow.” I got back to Washington that night, and the next day we had an appointment with Kissinger. So matzoh went onto the U.S.-Soviet diplomatic agenda. It was raised with Brezhnev, the Secretary of the Communist Party, and with Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister. It never worked. The last I heard the matzoh is still in the Post Office in the Soviet Union.

However, within three weeks we had some action on the other matter. The Jewish newspapers come out on a weekly basis - I don't know whether it's Tuesday or Thursday. I think it's Tuesday. On the first Tuesday of May, 1976, there was a statement by the Council of Torah Sages carried in the Jewish press, condemning the shooting of Soviet diplomats as contrary to Torah law. So that was it. The shootings stopped, never to resume again.

*Q: Even without the matzoh.*

MONTGOMERY: Even without the matzoh. I had a watcher from the Soviet Embassy in Washington, a guy who was in charge of me, because the Soviets are like that. His name was Ivan Andre. I called him up and said, “Andre, I want to take you to lunch.” So I took him to lunch. I told him this story, from beginning to end. I said, “What I'd like you to do is to go back to your Embassy and write a telegram, suggesting that the Soviet authorities let the matzoh out of the Post Office. I want you to get Ambassador Dobrynin to sign it.” He said, “Gee, I understand exactly what you're saying.” He had been in the U.S. for six years or so. He said, “I'll go back to the Embassy, I will write that telegram, and I will get Ambassador Dobrynin to sign it. But I'll tell you what will happen. It will get to Moscow and those old men in the Kremlin will see it and say, 'See? We were tough, and we made the Americans stop the shootings. They tried to pressure us with those crazy Jews, but now we got them to stop because we were tough. If we let that matzoh out of the Post Office, it will send the wrong message to the Americans.’” So I said, “Send that telegram anyway.” I think that he did, although he may have been misinforming me.

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However, from that point on I retained a relationship with Israel Singer, who had a handle on Jewish politics which went beyond what you could usually find by dealing with straight line Jewish organizations. This proved useful on several occasions.

One thing that Israel Singer did shortly thereafter was to convince the Chairman of the Board of the Singer Company, Edgar Bronfman, to become President of the World Jewish Congress. Through Israel Singer I met Edgar and became a sort of informal Jewish Affairs desk officer in the State Department over the years. I would arrange periodic meetings between Edgar and the Secretary of State, because Edgar was the President of the only worldwide Jewish organization with interests around the world and contacts with Jewish communities everywhere. Edgar had many dealings with the Soviet Union over the years - most of them unpleasant. Once the KGB even beat up one of his assistants. It wasn't very nice.

So, to jump ahead into my time in the Bureau of Public Affairs, there was a time in 1977 when the Carter administration issued a joint communique with the Soviet Union on the Middle East. This created a hell of a hullabaloo, because they consulted nobody in the Jewish community when they did this. Hodding Carter was the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, for whom I was working at the time. He called me up and said, "I understand that you know some people in the Jewish community." I said, "Yes." He said, "Can you 'fix' this problem?" I said, "I'll see what I can do." I went back and called Israel Singer. Israel and I put together a briefing for the Jewish community by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. We defused the situation beautifully - to the point where, three months later, the World Jewish Congress gathered in solemn conclave in Washington at a big dinner, where they presented President Jimmy Carter with an ancient 'Torah' in appreciation. So we were able to turn that situation around because of that contact. This was another place where I touched a little bit of history.

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Anyway, I would get visas for nice Jewish girls from Syria to get out and marry nice Jewish boys from the U.S. I would set up big briefings for Agudath Israel. They would show up in Washington.

Agudath Israel was a very Orthodox operation containing many Sephardic Jews. Most of the men in the organization wore big hats and big black beards. However, Moses Sherer didn't - he was clean shaven, for reasons that I never understood. One day I agreed to give a briefing to a group from Agudath Israel. I set up a briefing where the Secretary of State or Michael Armacost, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs in the Department, was going to talk. They were all gathered in the Acheson Auditorium in the Department. I shared the podium with Moses Sherer. We were sitting there, looking out at this crowd of Orthodox Jews, most of whom had big black beards. We were sitting there, and I said to Moses, "Now I want to welcome you to the State Department. We have done this before, Rabbi Sherer, and we're always pleased to do this. I just want to mention to you that we had a bit of a debate inside the Department, because Rabbi Sherer wanted to be the master of ceremonies this morning. However, we decided in the Department, given the circumstances, that it would be more appropriate to have the master of ceremonies with a beard." The place went wild!

The next morning my buddy, Israel Singer, who was in Jerusalem at the time, called me up and said, "God touched you!" I said, "What?" He said, "Your remark about Sherer's beard was in the JERUSALEM POST this morning."

So that was one of the things I got out of the Sonnenfeldt experience. When Edgar Bronfman wanted somebody to run a think tank in 1988 on what was going on in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, he called me up and made me an offer with Seagram's. It was too handsome to turn down. By that time, as we'll get to it later, I had serious questions about how long I was going to continue in the State Department anyway. So, always return your phone calls!

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*Q: Jim, is there anything else you would care to mention about your time working for Helmut Sonnenfeldt?*

MONTGOMERY: I think that this was the time when President Gerry Ford was wrestling Ronald Reagan for control of the Republican Party and who was going to get the Republican nomination for the elections of 1976. There was a treaty that we were going to sign with the Soviet Union. I think that it was an arms control treaty, having to do with a limited nuclear test ban, although I'm not sure. There is a public record on this.

We had set up a simultaneous signing ceremony. President Ford was going to sign the treaty here in Washington, DC, and Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, was going to sign it in Moscow. Within 12 hours of the date for signature, because of pressure from the Reagan supporters, we canceled the signature of the treaty. This was done so that President Ford would not be vulnerable to the charge from Reagan of having kow-towed to the Soviet Union.

This was also the time, and it is very reminiscent of today, when a Republican platform came out, condemning detente with the Soviet Union. Henry Kissinger was still Secretary of State.

I also got involved in some espionage issues - people disappearing or being kidnaped by the Soviets. I found this highly distasteful.

*Q: Were they kidnaped from the United States?*

MONTGOMERY: No, a man was kidnaped from Vienna. I really felt that we essentially wrote him off. We should not have done this. I don't remember the details, but the episode left a bad taste in my mouth.

*Q: There are some things that you can do and some things that you can't do. No one really has plenary powers.*

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MONTGOMERY: I was deeply involved and spent an enormous amount of time on the MBFR talks, the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction talks. Without a doubt this was the most complicated, convoluted, theological, and jargon-ridden set of negotiations which I have ever been involved in.

*Q: When did these negotiations begin and when did they end?*

MONTGOMERY: They began in about 1973. Senator Mansfield [Democrat, Montana] had submitted an amendment to the Defense appropriations bill to cut the number of troops stationed in Germany down to 100,000, or something like that. The administration responded to this by saying, "No, we should 'trade these reductions off.' We should get the Soviets to reduce their forces, also." Thus began the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction talks. They had not ended at the time the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

*Q: The whole concept was asymmetrical because, if the Soviets withdrew 100,000 troops, they withdrew them a couple of hundred miles. We would have to withdraw our troops to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. How could we ever reintroduce them? It would have been impossible.*

MONTGOMERY: Well, it kept Senator Mansfield at bay. I just remembered that, even after I left the State Department, I was sitting in at a briefing at the Department on something that Seagram's was interested in. There were some young Foreign Service Officers sitting behind me. One guy was talking about his work on the MBFR negotiations. He was using the same language that had been used 15 years before!

That's really about all I have to say about Sonnenfeldt. I was one of his Special Assistants when Jimmy Carter was elected President in 1976. I stayed there through the transition between the two administrations and then went into purdah for a little while and had no assignment until about six weeks later, when Bill Dyass reached out from the Bureau of

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Public Affairs and made me the Director of the Office of Public Programs. That gap wasn't too bad.

*Q: What did this job entail?*

MONTGOMERY: Well, handling public enquiries and providing answers to correspondence addressed to the State Department and getting magazine subscriptions and other material out was handled by P/OPS. That is, the Office of Public Services of the Bureau of Public Affairs. When the Department sent out speakers at the request of various groups and organizations, this was handled by the Office of Public Programs (P/PP). By the time I was involved, these were two separate operations.

The Office of Public Programs did several things. We responded to requests for public speakers. For example, the World Affairs Council in St. Louis would tell us that they wanted a public speaker on the Vietnam situation, the SALT talks [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks], or something like that. They would offer to reimburse the Department for the speaker's travel and hotel costs. We also staged briefings and town meetings in the Department and in other cities. The thrust, which was a good one on the part of Hodding Carter, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, was to get the Department to project itself beyond what we called traditional groups. That is, beyond local Councils on Foreign Relations or the League of Women Voters, which were the usual sponsors of such talks, and to reach out to minority, business-oriented, service clubs (Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and what have you) and to take advantage of the trips to carry the message on local radio and television. If somebody is going to pay the speaker's way to St. Louis, then the program officer should work the local media market so that the speaker can appear on five radio talk shows, do an editorial board interview, and so forth. As long as the speaker is out there, particularly when somebody else is paying for it, it is worth while taking advantage of the occasion.

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As far as I was concerned, that was a new emphasis that started when I was there. I was able, over a period of 15 months, from February, 1977, to May, 1978, to get the numbers of public appearances up quite dramatically. We were just beginning to bring in a computerized system to keep track of what was going on, so I installed that. We handled public appearances on the Panama Canal Treaty, SALT II...

Q: Didn't you make appearances on the SALT II Treaty yourself, and didn't Bill Colby [former Director of Central Intelligence] go out with you?

MONTGOMERY: I went out a lot, myself. Frequently, Bill Colby and I would wind up on the same platform. I believe that we brought about a significant change in how the Department conducts itself in terms of reaching out to the public. Our real problem was getting Cyrus Vance to recognize that he was the Secretary of State, and he didn't have to wait for an invitation to go and address some group, if we wanted to arrange for an appearance. We could stimulate the invitation. He didn't quite believe it. He would say, "You know, I think I should wait until I'm asked." We would say, "Well, we think you should address this group in Atlanta or Oklahoma. Leave it to us, and we can arrange for it."

Then we'd get on the phone, and the next morning their representatives were in my office, inviting the Secretary of State to speak on a given subject. Warren Christopher was the Deputy Secretary of State at the time. He was even more reticent about making public appearances.

However, we had a woman in New York named Dorothy Sarnoff who used to show up on a pro bono basis in Washington, DC, in exchange for expenses. She was a speech consultant. You may recall that the best speech that President Jimmy Carter ever gave was his final State of the Union address early in 1980. He finally broke down and hired Dorothy Sarnoff to help him deliver the speech properly. She would come down to Washington every two months or so, take over the time of the senior officers of the Department, and run them through several sessions on how to deal with TV. She did a



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marvelous job. People would come out of those sessions much better equipped to handle themselves.

Q: This is a surprising situation because the State Department has broad freedom, compared to other U.S. Government agencies, to go out and deal with issues which are controversial within the United States. However, other Government departments hold back and are very reluctant to do this. But people accept this from the State Department.

MONTGOMERY: Outside of the Department of Defense, the State Department is the only U.S. government agency that does a daily briefing for the press. It's remarkably open, in that sense.

Q: I think that the Department has a certain status in this area. It has not made the most of this opportunity, and most Foreign Service Officers don't want to make public appearances.

MONTGOMERY: The Department has not made use of its public access, including what we have just discussed, as well as the daily press briefing, to shore up its positions in the daily, bureaucratic battles with other Government departments. It just doesn't think in those terms, for reasons that I don't fully understand. It's too bad, but there it is.

Now, as you say, most Foreign Service Officers don't like to make public appearances. It's hard to get them to go. Once you get them to go, however, they usually enjoy themselves and realize that this is a nice break. People take them seriously. [Laughter] They think they're neat, because they're from the State Department. Appearances like this can be a lot of fun.

I found it extremely useful to be in that operation in the Office of Public Programs. My Jewish connections, as I mentioned before, turned out to be enormously helpful on a couple of occasions and really defused some situations that were quite difficult. I got this program up and running. I had a staff of about 30 people, so it was a significant

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management job. It was not trivial. I had some money available to spend. We had money for proactive activities, too, where we would send a speaker out and we would pay the speaker's travel and hotel expenses. We would allocate that money to the priority issues that we were interested in. We were able to get a lot of people out on a fairly steady basis, if we really used the opportunity of having people out there, instead of just addressing 100 people at a World Affairs Council dinner and then coming straight back to Washington. We got a lot of coverage.

As I say, I did some of these programs myself. I enjoyed it. It's an important function. As you say, you really have to educate FSOs about it. However, in terms of FSOs futures in the outside world - and every FSO is going into the outside world eventually - this is one of the best things that they can do. They need to get their faces outside the walls of the State Department.

Q: Jim, we've covered a lot of ground today. The next assignment I have for you is Director of the Office of International Security Policy in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. How did this assignment come up?

MONTGOMERY: This assignment came up because Lester Gelb, who was the Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs (PM), asked me if I'd like to take over the Office of International Security Policy. I had asked to be excused early from the Office of Public Programs, and they let me go. There was somebody on hand who was quite willing to take over the job. As a matter of fact, it was Charles Freeman who took over from me.

So I went over to the Office of International Security Policy in May, 1978. It was not my most satisfying time in the Department. It was one of those weird situations. We had staff meetings every other morning - or maybe even every morning - in the front office of the PM Bureau. All of the Office Directors would sit around and discuss the issues of the day, what was coming up, and so forth. The trick was to see if you could make a PC, which meant a profound comment. Les Gelb would go around the ring, asking each one

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for his views. You could say what you wanted to say and sit wherever you wanted to sit. Everybody had been there for a while - except me. I was a sort of newcomer because I came in during the middle of a transfer cycle. They would get around to me, and I would make what I thought was a profound comment on one of the issues of the day. Everybody would ignore it. They would go on to, perhaps, two other people. Then the second person would make the same profound comment that I had made, as if he had thought it up himself. And everybody would say, "Oh, isn't that interesting!" I was being ignored! Do you know what I mean? Have you ever been in a situation like that? Well, it sort of summed up my time in that position.

The big issue at that time - May, 1978, to June, 1979, was the deployment of intermediate range nuclear missiles to Europe. This involved nuclear-tipped Pershing II missiles and the Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCM), which carried either nuclear or conventional warheads. The issue was that the Soviets had deployed the intermediate range SS-20 missiles in Europe. This ignited great rounds of nuclear theological debates, consternation, and hand-wringing. It went to the core of the essential dilemma of nuclear weapons. The fact was that there were plenty of nuclear weapons in Europe to obliterate the Soviet Union if it ever fired an SS-20. However, this was beside the point. Something had to be done to respond to the SS-20s per se, or people in Europe might lose faith in the U.S. commitment to the defense of Western Europe. There was great angst (anxiety) and total unreality in these discussions.

I don't know whether you've ever gotten involved in the theology that surrounded our presence in Berlin.

*Q: I have. I know a couple of officers who worked on Berlin questions.*

MONTGOMERY: Then you understand how incredibly Byzantine the considerations were. In many ways this issue of the deployment of intermediate range nuclear missiles and GLCMs was like that, although it was not as incestuous and not quite as painful.

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Q: If I remember correctly, the SS-20s, which were intermediate range missiles, were designed to be fired from Soviet or Eastern European bases. SS-20s had too short a range to hit the United States.

MONTGOMERY: That's right.

Q: So, therefore, the Soviets could attack Western Europe and not the United States. Then, presumably, the issue would be that the United States could simply stand by and let the Europeans go. This was a European argument and had been the De Gaulle argument from the word go.

MONTGOMERY: However, the Soviet Union was perfectly capable of doing the same thing with its long-range ballistic missiles. They didn't have to build SS-20s to threaten Europe, but they built them because they could do it. It brought up all of this angst [anxiety]. You have summed it all up. We had submarines in the Mediterranean armed with Polaris missiles. We had submarines in the Atlantic which could respond to the SS- 20s. We had lots of aircraft that could do this. We had more nuclear weapons than you could shake a stick at. Have you ever seen a nuclear weapon?

Q: *I haven't seen one close up. I've only seen pictures of them.*

MONTGOMERY: I was in this hangar in England. They were dial a yield bombs, with a dial on the side - everything from 15 kilotons to half a megaton. The Air Force had them all over the place - including in Europe. Anyway, we had built the GLCM. We had to do something with it. We had developed the Pershing II missile, logically following on the Pershing I. As you can see, my view was that there was a mindless quality to this exercise. Besides, I wasn't in charge of the negotiations. My deputy, who remains to this day one of my best friends, was. But it was an awkward situation.

I also got involved in the decision to start selling non-lethamilitary equipment to China.

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*Q: What sort of equipment would this have been?*

MONTGOMERY: Radars, trucks, maintenance equipment for aircraft, air control equipment, navigational aids - maybe even some unarmed aircraft were involved. Again, it was one of those situations...

*Q: Who raised the Chinese interest in this? Did the Chinese approach or did we offer it to the Chinese?*

MONTGOMERY: What years are we talking about here?

*Q: Well, this was 1978 to 1979.*

MONTGOMERY: Yes, it was part of the prelude to the recognition of China, which Brzezinski saw as a potential counterweight to the Soviets.

*Q: So we already had a U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing.*

MONTGOMERY: Establishing full diplomatic relations with China was really an initiative of Secretary of State Vance, who got the bureaucracy started on the preparations. This was something that we wanted to do but didn't want to admit that we were doing it. In other words, we wanted to do it but not admit that we were changing our policy toward China. That's fine. We do that all the time.

So I was there as Director of the Office of International Security Policy for about 13 months.

*Q: I'm not trying to rush you through this, but your next assignment was a detail to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), from June, 1979, to February, 1981. Do you want to go over that one now?*

MONTGOMERY: Yes, let's do that, because it wound up being more interesting. I was in one of the bathrooms on the fifth floor of the Department, when Tom Hirschfeld entered

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the john. I said, "How are you, Tom?" He said, "Well, I'm off to Vienna. I'm looking for somebody to replace me." He was Assistant Director of ACDA for weapons evaluation. He said, "How would you like to replace me?" I said, "Yes, that sounds like fun." So we got the process going.

*Q: This is a good example of personnel planning.*

MONTGOMERY: Indeed. So I went to Les Gelb, Assistant Secretary of Political- Military Affairs (PM). I told him that I wasn't particularly enthusiastic about my work in PM. So I ended up going up to ACDA, working for Barry Gluckman in the Bureau of Weapons Evaluation, whose principal purpose was to meet a Congressional mandate to evaluate the arms control impact of all new weapons systems which the Pentagon might want to think up. It was also the place from which conventional arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union were conducted.

Anyway, I was on this ACDA detail for about 20 months, from June, 1979, to February, 1981. Gluckman left, and I became Acting Assistant Director of ACDA. Then Ralph Earle, who was the Director of ACDA at the time, named me Counselor, so I was number three in ACDA for a little more than one year.

That was sort of fun. The other job in ACDA, in the Bureau of Weapons Evaluation, was okay, but this was much better.

*Q: Well, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency was within the State Department. Did it ever, really, have a separate identity?*

MONTGOMERY: Yes. It was not really within the State Department. It was located in the same building. I suppose that it was under the Secretary of State in the sense of a dotted line on the organizational chart. It came directly under the Secretary. During the Kennedy administration Congress decided that the State Department wasn't paying enough attention to arms control and disarmament, so it created this separate agency.

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As Counselor of ACDA I got involved in several things which were pretty interesting. I ran the research program, involving contracts with various groups. Some of the subjects involved included submarine detection and things of that nature.

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Q: Today is October 14, 1996. Jim, when we broke this off the last time, you were just starting into your assignment with the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). Would you carry it on from there?

MONTGOMERY: I think that I had completed the part about my work in the Weapons Evaluation and Control Bureau. After a series of internal changes I ended up as No. 3 in the ACDA as the Counselor of the agency. This is much like the Counselor's job in the State Department, in that it is not a legal title. It's a Political Counselor type job. The job was primarily that, but it also involved some organizational responsibilities. One of these was the oversight and management of the expenditure of \$2-\$3 million a year on research which ACDA undertook to keep up with the U.S. military. Of course, this was a laughably small amount. What they could do for \$2-\$3 million was really pretty small.

I was in ACDA until President Jimmy Carter lost the election of 1980. I came away from that assignment with a much keener understanding of the bureaucratic politics of policy making and how useful it is to create, in the policy process, self-contained, autonomous entities that have their own point of view. People have argued - and the argument has begun again, particularly since the Republicans gained control of Congress in the 1994 elections - that all of these functions could be in the State Department. In the view of some people you don't need a separate Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. That is regarded, in this view, as inefficient.

Well, in a sense, this is true, if you believe that things can run effectively in a centralized fashion. However, the arms control people brought to the debate on security policy what

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procurement really is. Certainly, the arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union and with other countries as well were going ahead on an almost continuing basis. The arms control people brought to these negotiations a point of view and line of argument that tended toward the activist side on arms control.

Q: Let me raise a point here. You said that you were in ACDA until after President Carter lost the election of 1980. You were a Foreign Service Officer at the time and therefore not subject to the political vagaries of the day. Was this a Schedule C job?

MONTGOMERY: Yes. It was a Schedule C job.

*Q: In other words, this was a job which could or would change witevery administration.*

MONTGOMERY: This was a job which could change. As you know, in the State Department half of the jobs in the "Plum Book" (list of senior assignments), as it came to be called, ended up by being filled with political appointees, while half of them were filled by Foreign Service Officers. Indeed, the career of a Foreign Service Officer, at a certain point, moves into this zone where you are competing with politicians for policy positions, and this doesn't involve just Ambassadorial assignments. It really starts at the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State level. Those also are potential Schedule C jobs. Obviously, the Assistant Secretaries and the Under secretaries, etc, are also Schedule C jobs.

So your career, at this point, changes. How you think about it changes also, because you are tied into the political system at a certain point. Not that you become a political operative, but you have to understand how politics affect policy - and vice versa. I'll get into that in greater detail in discussing my role in the Bureau of Congressional Relations (H, as the State Department abbreviates it), where the political aspect was very obvious. However, in ACDA the whole question of arms control was a highly political proposition in the late 1970s. SALT I and SALT II were debated vociferously.



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*Q: Just to clarify this point. SALT I refers to the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks - Phase I, which entered into effect.*

MONTGOMERY: That's right.

*Q: Then, during the Carter years SALT II, the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks - Phase II, was negotiated. Was it ever transmitted to the Senate for its advice and consent?*

MONTGOMERY: I think that it was presented to the Senate, but they never voted on it. Then the Soviets invaded Afghanistan (in December, 1979), and that put an end to the prospects for Senate agreement to the ratification of the SALT II agreement. All bets were off.

As I mentioned before, I had had an assignment to the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM). This was not all of that much different from working in ACDA, as far as the subject matter was concerned. However, in ACDA I was more involved with strategic nuclear weapons systems than I was in PM. An impression of the essential, abiding, largely unrecognized unreality of the subject matter was what I carried away from my time in ACDA.

*Q: Unreality in what sense?*

MONTGOMERY: Here we had two opposing ideologies - two opposing superpowers, two opposing nations. They each had thousands and thousands of nuclear warheads. There would be arguments over whether we needed 100 more such nuclear warheads. People in Washington would go into these almost theological discussions about deterrence and how the addition of, say, 100 more nuclear warheads would affect the mindset of the Soviet Union if we shut down a plutonium processing facility that was clearly not needed. The view was, "Well, if we shut this down, the Soviets will think that we are weakening in

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our resolve, etc.” And there we were sitting with an arsenal of, perhaps, 30,000 nuclear warheads!

I remember in particular one vivid moment, when we decided to increase plutonium production for some reason or another. The Deputy Director of ACDA was in a meeting with Zbigniew Brzezinski who, at the time, was National Security Adviser to President Carter. The Deputy Director of ACDA came back from that meeting and said, “Brzezinski was very pleased about this decision to increase plutonium production” which Brzezinski had been pushing in interagency councils. Brzezinski reportedly said that this decision would have a marvelous effect on Third World thinking. Now, just stop and think about that! How zany and out of touch with anything approaching reality can you get?

*Q: Did Brzezinski say which Third World countries he was thinking of?*

MONTGOMERY: Indeed. Which Third World countries were going to wake up some morning and say, “Great! The Americans are increasing plutonium production! Isn't this wonderful?” I was constantly amazed at people's ability to suspend common sense.

Q: But they didn't really know. I don't think that it was so much a matter of suspending common sense. They just didn't know. I remember Bob Gray, who worked with me in the Embassy in Canberra. At the beginning of every session of the UN General Assembly, every Embassy in the world gets a list of issues expected to come up. You are supposed to go around to the local foreign ministry and ask them what their position was going to be on these matters. In most places in the world, particularly in Africa, they are hardly aware of these issues. They have much more immediate problems. Well, I think that Brzezinski had never served in a Third World country and probably didn't have any understanding of the situation facing them.

MONTGOMERY: It's not just that. The decision to increase plutonium production - well, we have more plutonium on hand, as we see now, than we literally know what to do with. The idea that increasing plutonium production was going to have a useful effect on anything is

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ridiculous. The other thing was an unwillingness - and maybe this was one of my problems as a Foreign Service Officer - savoring the essential ridiculousness of it all periodically, to keep yourself sane! This was something that bemused me.

Another consideration was the sheer bureaucratic momentum of these programs. I am convinced that the reason the Soviets decided to build and deploy SS-20 missiles (medium range missiles) is that they had a Bureau of Rocket Production. They had to keep busy.

The reason that we were deploying Pershing II rockets and GLCM's (Ground Launched Cruise Missiles) to Europe was that we had built them - and we didn't know what to do with them. We had to put them some place!

Q: I think that there was another factor in the case of Europe. A number of European countries, led by Helmut Schmidt, who was then German Chancellor, said to the U.S., "You must do something about these Soviet SS-20 missiles." So there really was not only a request but virtually a demand that we do something, even though we had some reluctance to do this. In the event we responded to NATO, which I think we had to do. But basically, I think that you're quite right.

MONTGOMERY: There was the NATO aspect, but Helmut Schmidt was absurd, too. Whether or not we put these missiles in Europe or in submarines off the European coast is meaningless. The idea that an SS-20, which had a range of 620 miles, was somehow more dangerous than an ICBM, with a range of 5,000 miles, is silly. In fact, the ICBM could be set to go 500 miles.

Q: There was one other point, and I think that this really moved Schmidt. The Soviets deployed a massive effort in Western Europe to prevent the European governments from accepting the Pershing and GLCM missiles.

MONTGOMERY: But this was later on.

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Q: This was in the course of the deployment. It took some time before they were actually deployed. The Soviets spent a lot of money on the campaign to prevent the European countries from allowing this deployment, too. Of course, the Western countries were perfectly able to collect the intelligence on this Soviet effort. They knew that the Soviets were doing this. The Soviets were showing their hand. This was a factor although, basically, you are quite right about this issue as a whole.

MONTGOMERY: I would go to meetings, and people would argue, for instance, that it would make a difference in Soviet thinking in case of a nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union whether or not they were hit by a GLCM launched from Great Britain or Germany instead of a warhead launched from Minot, North Dakota, where U.S. ICBMs were based. It was suggested that the Soviets would distinguish between the two and draw finely-nuanced political conclusions from them. Grown people would make those arguments!

Q: *That is essentially absurd.*

MONTGOMERY: I was in ACDA during the great controversy over the Mmissile.

Q: *What was the MX?*

MONTGOMERY: The MX was a new generation of missiles.

Q: *Was it smaller?*

MONTGOMERY: Not necessarily smaller. It was mobile. We had Minutemen intercontinental ballistic missiles. This was, in a sense, an attempt to solve the essentially insolvable, but in so doing you could serve bureaucratic interests enormously. Let me explain.

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The Minutemen missiles were in fixed silos. Each Minuteman had three or four MIRV'ed (Multiple, Independently Targetable, Reentry Vehicles) warheads. They were deployed in fields in North Dakota, and I think that there were some in Kansas. We had a large number of Minutemen deployed all across the United States. The idea was that they would be there for retaliatory purposes, should the Soviets launch their missiles. These were solid fueled missiles, so they were low maintenance and capable of being launched quickly. They were quick launch, ready to roll. Now, Paul Nitze and the Committee on the Present Danger began their efforts in the mid-1970s. You may remember Team B which George Bush, then Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, called into being to evaluate the general intelligence consensus on what the Soviets were up to. This committee came into being and took a much harsher view of what the Soviets were likely to do, and so forth. They invented the term, window of vulnerability. The window of vulnerability meant that, in view of the perceived increasing accuracy of Soviet missiles, these Minutemen were becoming vulnerable to a Soviet first strike. In other words, even with all of these missiles sitting in their holes in the U.S., and given the increasing accuracy of Soviet warheads, including not only the delivery vehicle but the power of their warheads, the Committee on the Present Danger came up with the formula that the Soviets were getting to the point that they could consider a first strike against these U.S. missiles, without suffering from a counter strike. The committee said that the Soviets could fire their missiles, blow away all of our Minutemen, and then we would be at the mercy of the Soviets.

To reach that conclusion, Team B had to ignore all of the nuclear warheads carried by U.S. warplanes all around the world, and they had to ignore submarine-launched missiles. One missile-launching submarine was perfectly capable of destroying the Soviet Union as a working society for the next 500 years. However, these people on the Committee on the Present Danger had coined this term, the window of vulnerability, and they wanted to use it. They loved this concept because it led to the idea of developing a mobile missile that would be on wheels.

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*Q: Weren't there two versions? One was on a railroad that would sort of circle around...?*

MONTGOMERY: Tom, there were 25 versions of this mobile missile. None of them would work! There was a new missile involved which had 10 warheads on it, instead of the three or four warheads on the Minuteman. It was, in some sense, smaller. They had developed an incredible number of strategies so that the Soviets could not contemplate, with any confidence, that they could wipe our MX missiles out. I think that finally what happened was that the new missile was built, the billions of dollars went into the U.S. economy, particularly into the aerospace industry in California which was required to build that missile - but it never was deployed in a mobile fashion. If you stop to think about it, if these new missiles were not deployed in a mobile fashion, we might just as well have kept the Minuteman missiles. We might just as well have kept the missiles that were already in the silos. One wag in the State Department - I think that it was Dick Snyder - who was Under Secretary of State for Science and Technology, was once quoted as saying about these new missiles, "You can't have any of these new missiles until you use the old ones!" [Laughter]

In any case, the situation was totally unreal. There were enormous financial and bureaucratic interests involved in building these new missiles because there were a number of two, three, and four star billets (flag officer jobs) concerned with the production and deployment of these missiles. In many ways it was not a case of mass insanity, because that implies no logic. There was lots of logic to the development, manufacture, and deployment of the new missiles. It was the assumptions underlying the decisions involved which were totally insane. If you accepted the assumption that the Soviets would somehow think that they could escape horrendous retaliation if they took out just one leg of the strategic triad (land-based, air-launched, and submarine launched missiles) and that this would somehow embolden the Soviets to attempt to do so, then the conclusions were logical.

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I spent a lot of time engaged in this kind of discussion. However, I don't know if I ever really touched history, which we talked about before.

Q: Well, you were asking the question, "Does this really make sense?" That's a fair and very important question to ask. It normally is not asked in the State Department because, really, you don't challenge authority directly on a matter like this. You can't say to someone who is trying to justify the decisions made, "Are you out of your mind?" Whatever the issue.

MONTGOMERY: I often discovered that the most effective thing I could do was to find an opportunity to ask that question, "Are you out of your mind?" or, "Why are we doing that?" When you could ask one of those questions, all kinds of things would fall out.

Last week I went to a meeting of the China Working Group of the National Association of Manufacturers. The question under discussion concerned the entry of China into the World Trade Organization (WTO). There were lots of people sitting around the table, from various corporations, worrying about the various technical aspects of this ongoing negotiation. We had a man from a law firm who knows these negotiations up one side and down the other.

It was just like back in the State Department. They didn't want to talk about the political context of this issue. There were things that the U.S. Government had to do vis-a-vis China if we ever hoped to get the Chinese to negotiate seriously. The Chinese have been flipping the finger at us for two years, and these guys didn't even know it, because they only looked at the very narrow trade-related questions. They didn't look at the context in which this matter rested. It was the context that was going to kill them. Because if we didn't solve the politics of China's entry into the WTO, then the Chinese were going to retaliate against all of those corporations whose representatives were sitting around the table. But they didn't want to talk about the political context, because they hadn't thought about it and because they would have had to bring into play a wholly different set of approaches, analytical capabilities, and so forth.

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This just proves that a bureaucracy is a bureaucracy is a bureaucracy.

Q: There's one other question, Jim. Do you think that the Chinese understood this? Did they have any understanding of the political realities or the political play in the United States?

MONTGOMERY: Oh, no, they are just as badly off as we are. I heard the Chinese Minister of Foreign Trade make a speech on this subject on December 27, 1995 - right here in Washington, DC. She came up with an analysis of American politics that would have been ludicrous if it hadn't been so dangerous. Our bureaucracies are at least informed by a horrendously free flow of information, including leaks, contradictions, and investigative reporting. Their bureaucracies are not so well informed. We may talk about being in a bureaucracy and how difficult it is to say, "Are you out of your mind?" Well, you get sent off to work on a pig farm in China if you ask that question - or worse! So Chinese bureaucrats are in an infinitely worse position. One of the reasons why the Soviet Union collapsed is that questions like these were asked much less frequently than they were asked in the U.S.

Q: *The Soviet relationship with reality got dimmer and dimmer.*

MONTGOMERY: Right. Whereas in this country there are systems which yank us back to reality, however imperfectly, with much more robustness than they do in China now and used to do in the Soviet Union.

So I came away from my time in ACDA very much better educated, I think, regarding how things really work. The one thing that I did which touched history during this time was when I was Executive Secretary of what was called the GAC, the General Advisory Council of ACDA. When ACDA was created in the early 1960s, Congress was afraid that a bunch of pinko, Left Wing, Godless Liberals would run away with national security policy. Congress wanted to make sure that there was a brake on what ACDA did. So Congress



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created a kind of Board of Directors called the General Advisory Council, which included people from outside the government appointed to oversee the activities of ACDA.

Sometimes the GAC was totally ineffectual. At other times it was useful. The membership of GAC would review arms control policy on a periodic basis. It was fairly active and we kept up a good relationship with the members of the GAC. Its members included people from the AFL/CIO (American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organizations) and others from various walks of life - retired military officers, etc. McGeorge Bundy, former National Security Adviser to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, was the chairperson of the GAC at the time I was concerned with it. After President Carter lost the election of 1980 and during the transition period to the Reagan administration the GAC came up with a series of recommendations for the new administration as to how it should proceed for the first six months. It set out the various arms control issues and the various arms control negotiations then under way and made recommendations on what the new administration should do. I organized the meetings at which these recommendations were developed, I wrote the paper and got it cleared within the U.S. Government, and the Reagan administration followed our advice for the next six months. I always felt that we made a useful contribution on that score.

*Q: That's a good way to end your assignment with ACDA. Maybe the people in the Reagan administration just didn't understand the issues.*

MONTGOMERY: Maybe their following these recommendations was just totally coincidental. However, we made recommendations on a sensible way to proceed in dealing with these arms control issues and to avoid getting into trouble during this period of six months. And the Reagan administration proceeded that way. They were even able to get through their initial burst of craziness which new administrations apparently have to go through. They basically ended up following the established policy and, for a number of reasons, with some success.

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One of the figures in the Reagan administration adopted a “What are you, out of your mind?” proposition that I put forward when, I believe, I was in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. When we were making all of these decisions to deploy the GLCM's and the Pershing II missiles against the Soviet SS-20s, we set out the arms control position to go along with that. We made proposals to limit these deployments which we could use to accompany this package.

I said, “You know, one of the things that we should include in the 'arms control package' is that if the Soviets don't deploy any SS-20 missiles, we won't deploy any GLCM's or Pershing II missiles, either.” People who heard me say this thought that I was absolutely insane, because that was the last thing that they wanted to happen. Even if the Soviets deployed no SS-20s, these people still wanted to deploy the GLCM's and Pershing II missiles because they had to put them some place. So my suggestion was laughed out of court.

However, in a fit of Machiavellianism Richard Perle, the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs in the Reagan administration who was sometimes called the Prince of Darkness, put forth a proposal which he was sure that the Soviets wouldn't accept. So Perle adopted my idea and put that in as one of the arms control options.

*Q: He was a political appointee, wasn't he? What was his background?*

MONTGOMERY: He was an adviser to Senator Jackson (Democrat, State of Washington) and was regarded as Jackson's “eminence grise” (gray eminence or close adviser). He had a lot to do with the Jackson-Vanik amendment linking a U.S. grant of most favored nation status to the Soviet Union to the Soviets' allowing Jews to leave the Soviet Union.

So Perle proposed this scheme that, if the Soviets take out all of their SS-20s, we'll take out all of our GLCM's and Pershing II missiles. He was sure, of course, that this wouldn't happen. Then the Commie bastards collapsed and they agreed to it. Subsequently, we

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had to pull out all of our GLCMs and Pershings. Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister at the time, was just beside herself that we had been caught with this petard, which was, of course, a perfectly rational outcome.

Q: Meanwhile, the British and the French retained their missiles.

MONTGOMERY: Yes, but that's theologically unsound. We also assumed in this discussion that if the Soviets were hit with a British and a U.S. missile, they would make political distinctions between those two events, particularly if they struck the Soviet Union simultaneously. [Laughter]

Q: Scientifically, there may be a difference in the signature of British and American missiles - though I don't know enough about this. However, I doubt that the Soviets would worry about this.

MONTGOMERY: I remember that one of the Soviets in their Ministry of Foreign Affairs whom I knew told me about their civil defense plan. This comment related to one of the arguments put forward by the Committee on the Present Danger - that the Soviets had developed an incredibly sophisticated civil defense plan so that, when they fired all of their missiles at our Minutemen missiles in the U.S. in a putative first strike, all of the Soviets would run into their caves and survive what puny retaliation we could muster with the 20,000 or so nuclear warheads that were left over after such a Soviet first strike. Then, according to the Committee on the Present Danger, the Soviets would emerge and conquer the world. One of the Soviets said, "Yes, we have a civil defense plan. When we are warned of an incipient American strike, we hop in our cars, rush out to the cemetery, and then wait. That's our civil defense plan." [Laughter]

I think that the memory of all of this is sort of instructive. It is good to keep the memory alive regarding that period, when we lived under what we thought was a major Soviet threat. It is certainly not in a class with the Holocaust (the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis during World War II), although, if there had been a major exchange of

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thermonuclear weapons during the Cold War, it would have been. However, it's good to remember how you can go down along a really insane path in the allocation of national resources.

*Q: Remember, this was a policy that continued for many years.*

MONTGOMERY: Oh, yes. It wasn't thought up the day I walked into ACD- that's for sure. It had been underway for a long time.

I was sitting there in ACDA after President Jimmy Carter was defeated in 1980. The political appointee who would replace me was coming in to measure the drapes in my office, which was fair enough. That's the name of the game.

I received a phone call from the newly-appointed Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations (H), Richard Fairbanks. He asked me to come over for an interview with him. He was a political appointee who was putting together a team of four DAS's (Deputy Assistant Secretaries of State) to run the Bureau of Congressional Relations. There were to be three political appointees and one Foreign Service Officer. I became the house FSO as a Deputy Assistant Secretary. I was in that office from March, 1981, to February, 1986 - almost five years.

*Q: And how long were you in ACDA?*

MONTGOMERY: I was in ACDA for about a year and a half - from early 1979 to January, 1981.

In Congressional Relations, this was a kind of juncture point. Prior to this point the President would go to Congress for the resources and authorizations that he needed to conduct our foreign relations. In many ways the authorizations were more important than the resources.

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While I was in Congressional Relations, I found myself increasingly involved in the State Department's speakers programQ: In which you'd already had some experience.

MONTGOMERY: In which I'd already had considerable experience. I ended up making a lot of speeches on Congress and the conduct of foreign policy. I found an interesting synergism between the work of the State Department and the Congress. I found that, because I was a practicing operative of foreign policy, I was a good speaker. I had some very good things to say to people about how foreign policy was conducted and I could use very concrete examples about what was going on at that very moment. I also found that being a public speaker forced me to think about what I was doing. This made me a better foreign policy operative. This is the synergism. The better an operator I became, the better speaker I became, and vice versa.

I came to the connection between the Executive and Legislative Branches of the government at an interesting time. The Congressional reassertion of its role in the conduct of foreign policy was reaching fruition. It was becoming much more full throated. This reassertion started when the Vietnam War began to go sour in the 1960s. If you want to point to one thing that really got this reassertion of the Congressional role in the conduct of foreign policy started, in a formal sense, and also took this reassertion beyond the Vietnam question as such, it was the hearings on U.S. security commitments and arrangements abroad, conducted by Senator Symington (Democrat, Missouri) in 1979. We have already discussed this period when we talked about my time in the Embassy in Bangkok, when I accompanied Ambassador Unger to testimony before this committee, which was looking into security arrangements and commitments to Thailand. This was the point when Congress began to pick up the prerogatives and responsibilities which it had set aside for 30 years.

Q: Wasn't there something else happening, too? Congress was providing itself with staffs that could look into various questions, providing young university graduates of American universities with jobs in Congress, instead of their going into the State Department and

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other Washington agencies, as had previously been the case. They went onto the staffs of Congressional bigwigs, traveled all over the world, and wrote all kinds of papers.

MONTGOMERY: In many ways Congressional staffs became the “Third and a half branch” of the U.S. Government. In the field of foreign policy Congress had been subservient to the Executive Branch for two reasons.

One reason was organizational. This flowed from psychological and political decisions that Congress made over the years to allow the Executive Branch virtual free rein in the conduct of foreign policy. This process really began in the late 1930s with President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He assumed broad powers in connection with World War II.

*Q: There was the War Powers Act, specifically.*

MONTGOMERY: The War Powers Act wasn't passed until 1973.

*Q: I'm referring to the War Powers Act passed in 1941 or early 1942.*

MONTGOMERY: The absolute high point of this relationship occurred when the Manhattan Project (the World War II program to develop the atomic bomb) was running out of money in about 1943. General George Marshall, then Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, went up to the House of Representatives Appropriation Committee. He said, “I need more money for something I can't tell you about.” Congress displayed its usual extreme reluctance to satisfy a request like this. General Marshall said, “Listen, I'm the Chief of Staff of the Army. I'm telling you that we need this for the national security. We cannot win the war without this. It is of such nature that I cannot tell you about it, but if you do not give me this money, you will be reviled by your children and children's children down through the last corridor of recorded time. Give me the money.” And Congress gave him the money. Insofar as there is a coherent intelligence in the Executive Branch, people thought that this was a pretty neat way to do business. [Laughter]

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*Q: The Irish call that the hard word. General Marshall gave Congress the hard word.*

MONTGOMERY: He gave them the hard word. So this attitude continued immediately into the Truman administration after World War II. We had gotten rid of Hitler but we immediately had Stalin and then Mao Tse-tung to face. For all practical purposes the President of the United States, despite the Constitution, began to function like the heads of virtually every other government in the world, with very few exceptions too minor to be noted. Virtually every other government in the world is a unitary player in the conduct of foreign policy. In other words, what the head of government says, goes. You can write a check when the head of government makes a commitment. This is obviously true of authoritarian governments, for obvious reasons. However, it's also true of democracies. Virtually all of the other democracies in the world - again, with a few exceptions - are parliamentary democracies. So when the head of government speaks, you know that there is a parliamentary majority behind him or her to back up what they say. A perfect example of this is the commitments which Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher made to Deng Hsiao-ping on Hong Kong. Margaret Thatcher had the parliamentary majority behind her. Deng Hsiao-ping had the Communist Party of China behind him. They both could rely on what the other was saying.

Now, when the President of the United States now says to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, "We're going to sell you some F-16 fighter aircraft," well, this may or may not happen. There is a question. However, between 1945 and the latter part of the Vietnam War, when the President of the United States made a commitment, you could rely on it as much as you can rely on some prime minister's or some dictator's commitment. Because during the 1945-1970 period Congress was prepared to give the President virtually whatever the President wanted. There was an anti-communist consensus in the country. There were pious statements like, "We may not agree with our President, but he's the only President we have. Besides, politics have to stop at the water's edge. Of course, we'll go along with whatever he wants."

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An examination of the Executive-Congressional relationship at the beginning of the Vietnam War, say, in 1962, illustrates exactly what I'm talking about. There was no question whatsoever that the President had the authority.

*Q: The Tonkin Gulf Resolution passed the Senate with one dissenting vote, I believe.*

MONTGOMERY: There were two dissenting votes - Senators Morse (Republican, Oregon) and Gruening (Democrat, Alaska). Do you know who the floor leader of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was?

*Q: Yes, it was Senator Fulbright (Democrat, Arkansas).*

MONTGOMERY: It was Fulbright. I think that there was an unrecorded unanimous vote on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in the House of Representatives.

During the Korean War there was even less question about President Truman's authority to commit American troops to Korea. There was a meeting at the White House between President Truman, Secretary of State Acheson, and a couple of Senators. President Truman told them what the government was going to do. The Senators said, more or less, "Well, if you'd like it and it would be helpful, we'll pass a resolution supporting what you've done." Truman said, "Secretary Acheson will get back to you on that." Later on, Acheson got back to the Senators and said, "We don't think that a resolution would be helpful." So the Senators said, "Okay."

So during this period from 1945 to 1970 U.S. Presidents could sit down with their foreign counterparts and behave just like them. They could make commitments like their counterparts.

That consensus began to shred when Congress began to look into its powers and its control of the purse. It began to appreciate that foreign policy could have a tremendous domestic impact. It's one of the few policy areas that can get you killed, if it's not done



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right. Concomitant with this was that, as Congress began to reassert its role in foreign policy, it began to make organizational changes. It began to eat into the monopoly of information which the Executive Branch had on the conduct of foreign policy. In effect, the Executive Branch had the details on what was going on in the world. Congress did not. The Executive Branch had the reporting from Embassies and Consulates and from the intelligence agencies. Congress did not.

Again, just look at the early days of the Vietnam War. There was no alternative source of information and interpretation from an aggressive press for a number of years after World War II. In the early reporting out of Vietnam, when you and I first arrived in Saigon in 1960, the press was almost totally supportive of what the administration was doing, insofar as press comment existed. In 1960, when you and I got to Vietnam, there was not a single permanent, resident foreign correspondent in Vietnam. Not one. There was some investigative reporting - I think that it was by Homer Bigart, who showed up in Saigon.

*Q: I think that he came later on.*

MONTGOMERY: The only thing that I remember, when you and I were in Vietnamese language training, the only investigative reporting that we saw about Vietnam was a scandal over the fact that Arthur Gardiner (then the Director of the AID Mission in Vietnam) had three freezers in his house. So Congress was blind and had to accept what the administration gave it, and the Executive Branch could manipulate that information. I don't mean manipulate in a malign way. I mean that they automatically did it. Executive Branch spokesmen would say, "Well, Mr. Congressman, if you could only see this telegram..." And the Congressman would say, "Oh, yes, I understand." Looking back on that period is a nostalgic experience.

What I inherited in Congressional Relations was a situation where you had to create a series of apparent consensuses to deal with each problem. You had to create little coalitions and consensuses for each decision. I'm exaggerating somewhat.

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*Q: But they were different coalitions.*

MONTGOMERY: They were different coalitions, whereas it was a total given in 1960. By 1980, if you wanted to sell Airborne Warning and Control (AWACS) systems on Boeing 707's to Saudi Arabia, you had to build a Congressional-Executive consensus before you offered the aircraft. The Saudis shouldn't bother writing their check to Boeing Aircraft until that consensus is developed, despite what the President said. It was a totally different situation than it had been in 1960. This meant that the job in the Bureau of Congressional Relations was infinitely more demanding and fascinating. It was the most interesting job that I've ever had in my life.

Serving as Consul in Chiang Mai in Thailand was interesting and even fun. But the job in Congressional Relations was real. It was a time when, I think, I touched history more often than in any other job I had in the State Department. You can get out the Congressional Record for that period, and I can show you my footprints here and there.

Congressional Relations was an incredible organizational and cultural experience, in that you began to understand how different the State Department was. The State Department is a very centralized operation. The Department values secrecy and discretion. It is not automatically programmed to disclose things to the public. It does not seek public approval on a daily basis. Congress is totally different.

The staff employed by Congress gave it an ability to compete with the Executive Branch in terms of information and analysis. This staff gave Congress an alternative view of what was going on in the world. We all know how the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) often contradicts OMB (Office of Management and Budget). That is the most vivid institutionalized example of this phenomenon of being able to second guess the administration. That is done on an almost institutionalized, ritualized basis. However, by 1980 this process of second guessing was pervasive, because Congress had the capability of doing it, in a way which simply didn't exist in 1960. You were absolutely right

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when you put your finger on Congressional staff. All you have to do is look at how many Congressional staffers were working for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1960 and the much larger number of staffers who were working there in 1980. You begin to see the difference.

What that comparison doesn't show, however, is the way things were changing internally in Congress, making the job of the Bureau of Congressional Relations in the State Department more difficult. That is, the rise in the authority and influence of the Appropriations Committees, particularly in the conduct of foreign affairs and especially regarding foreign assistance programs.

Few Members of Congress are willing to go on record voting for foreign assistance. Of course, an overwhelming majority of Members of Congress recognize that we have to have a foreign assistance program, but they certainly don't want to vote for it. So what began to happen was that whenever an authorization bill for foreign assistance would come up, it would be voted down, and everybody could go on record as voting against foreign assistance. Then they would consider an appropriations bill for foreign assistance, often rolled into a continuing resolution that had other appropriations in it. Then the Members of Congress would vote for it. What this meant was that if you wanted some substantive changes in foreign assistance - and particularly changes in the authorizations surrounding the use of this money - you had to go to the Appropriations Committee to have this change or changes put into the basic authorization.

Appropriations bills used to be one page long. However, because of this situation they ended up being 300 pages long, because they began to include the authorization in the appropriations bill. This brought a whole new set of players into the process. You still had to take care of the authorizing committees because - particularly on the Senate side - they confirmed the appointments the State Department wanted to make. Even on the House of Representatives side they could do things for the Department. The House authorizing committee, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, generated the Foreign Assistance bill

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which nobody voted for. However, you couldn't completely ignore them, because they also prepared the authorization bill that kept the doors of the State Department open. This bill was different from the Foreign Assistance bill. So you had to deal with the House Foreign Affairs Committee because it was there.

Often, because the Foreign Assistance bill couldn't get passed, foreign assistance type material would creep into the Department of State authorization bill - because it was one of the few viable legislative vehicles going.

Q: Wasn't there another problem? You spoke of the internal arrangements in Congress. Wasn't it a fact that the Congressional Committee chairmen were losing their power over the members of their committees to commit the committee to do something?

MONTGOMERY: Oh, yes. That happened in particular after the Watergate Affair in 1974. The idea had been that you would go up and talk to a given chairman of a committee, reach agreement with him, and that would be all that you had to worry about. Often, you can still do it that way but, generally speaking, there are more variables in the situation than there were in 1960.

There was also an internal problem in the State Department. That is, the Bureau of Congressional Relations was primarily concerned with Foreign Assistance and other pieces of foreign affairs related legislation. However, the office of the Under Secretary of State for Management (M) had its own Congressional relations operation and was primarily concerned with the State Department authorization bill and the State Department appropriations bill. These were separate pieces of legislation. There would be conflicts of interest between H (Congressional Relations) and M (Office of the Under Secretary for Management).

This conflict came to the fore particularly after the Budget Act of 1974 was passed. Under the Act of 1974 all foreign affairs functions were put under a general budget category

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called Section 150. A lump sum would be earmarked for this category by the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee which could be spent on this Section 150 function.

*Q: Section 150 of what?*

MONTGOMERY: Section 150 of the Budget Resolution as it would come out. I'm not going to go into this issue in detail, but those who read this will be able to follow what I'm saying when they read it. What this would mean is that the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee would say to the foreign affairs people concerned with Section 150, which would involve several subcommittees of the Appropriations Committee, "Okay, there will only be \$1.0 billion this year for the whole '150' function." You could well find a situation where opening an Embassy in Kazakhstan would compete with an irrigation program in, say, Bangladesh. And there were two different parts of the State Department concerned about this. Back in 1960 this used to be okay, when the State Department authorization bill was, maybe, two pages long, and the State Department appropriations bill was, maybe, one page long. However, by the 1980s you began to find these issues starting to overlap. One real accomplishment was that, after a number of years of almost total divorcement between following Congressional authorization and appropriations functions in the State Department, I was able to bring the two of them together. This was mainly due to my buddy, Dwight Mason, who had a job that was the counterpart of mine in the Office of the Under Secretary for Management. On a personal, not an institutional basis, we were able to work out a relationship which kept these two functions from slamming into each other.

I remember that in my early days in H, when Richard Fairbanks was the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, somebody came to Dick and said, "Well, your bill's on the floor of the House tomorrow." He said, "What do you mean?" The other fellow said, "Yes, Congressman Dante Fascell has taken the State Department authorization bill to the floor." He was the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. And Fairbanks didn't even know about it! This arrangement was being run out of the Office of the Under Secretary of State for Management. It was an absolute disaster, because

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some Congressman thought that it was a Foreign Assistance bill. Other people didn't understand what it was, and so forth. From that point on we began to put together an increasing degree of coordination between H and M, two operations that could have been in an interesting conflict.

I'm not sure how the State Department handles this matter today but I think that they've begun to solve that coordination problem. However, this was another variable in the equation that had to be managed. Previously, you would often find that somebody in M would call you up and say, "Hey, have you seen page 33 of this or that?" It would be something that pertained to our interest.

However, in terms of Congressional relations with the State Department, I would say that, on balance, the difficult part of that equation was dealing with the State Department. Institutionally, the State Department was not organized to deal with this fragmented empire of Congress. As a personnel matter the State Department was still full of people who remembered when foreign policy was handled right and properly and when these god damned politicians didn't interfere with foreign affairs professionals conducting our foreign policy.

*Q: There still are people like that in the Department.*

MONTGOMERY: There still are people like that now, but there were a lot more of them in 1980! Some of them are pretty young and will probably be around for a long time. They only remember these things through tradition, and not through actual practice. Others, of course, remember through their own experience how things used to be done. For instance, you would call up the committee Chairman, explain things to him, and the Chairman would take care of things. Sometimes they didn't even call the Chairman. So I was constantly dealing with problems like this.

I think that one of the subtle problems affecting this situation is the academic approach or the academic tradition surrounding the conduct of foreign policy. That is, academics

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tend to look at the United States Government as a unitary player. We looked at the Soviet Union and China as unitary players. We often tend to say, "The Soviet Union did this or that," as if that explained it, or, "The People's Republic of China did that." It is then very easy to say, "The United States Government" did this or "United States policy" on this or that issue is this or that. When you have this concept in your mind, then you begin to look for the person who has his fingers on this set of controls. You naturally look at the State Department - particularly if you work in the State Department - to find the answers. When you find out that things don't work the way you expect them to work, you don't like to accept the way it works. You want to criticize it and say that it is a perversion. You tend to resent it and fight against it.

The example I am going to give you now had to do with the ability of insurance companies in the United States to set up operations offshore in Bermuda. This promised to be an extremely lucrative business for Bermuda. The U.S. depended on Bermuda for a number of national security arrangements having to do with the underwater detection of hostile or enemy submarines. So there was an impulse to accommodate Bermuda. One of the Congressional subcommittees introduced a piece of legislation that would have made it difficult for U.S. insurance companies to operate offshore in Bermuda. If this legislation had been passed, it would have cut into Bermuda's cash flow. The administration had not been able to pull itself together and come up with an answer to this problem because of conflicts within it.

One of my officers who was following this issue said that there would be a mark-up (line by line consideration of the draft legislation) the next day. He called up people in the State and Treasury Departments to get a position on the matter. He was told, "We don't want to take a position. This is a difficult question." So he told them, "If you don't take a position, there are 11 Congressmen up on Capitol Hill who will take a position for you. Now, would you like that to happen or not?" So the State and Treasury Departments came up with a position which was duly passed on to the subcommittee.

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You would see things like this happen all the time - an unwillingness or resentment at having to make a decision. In many cases this meant letting the issue go into the hands of Congress for resolution.

Here is another perfect example of this culture clash. In 1971 Henry Kissinger made a secret trip to China which led to a kind of normalization of relations between the U.S. and China. Kissinger was imbued with a kind of Metternichian view of foreign policy. Deep down, he felt that members of parliament (or of Congress) should have nothing to say about foreign policy. He imposed this sort of secret approach on our dealings with China which tended to cut everybody else out of it and made it Sino-centric. In his view, when you were dealing with China policy, the only group you had to deal with was in this 5,000 year old civilization, filled with very wise people who never make mistakes. Of course, that's why China did so well in the 19th century! He felt that the formulation of our China policy should be in the hands of a specially-initiated group - a little bit of a priesthood, if you will. That is, people who do things with this 5,000 year old civilization. Well, back around 1981 or 1982 the current representatives of this 5,000 year old civilization came to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila and said, "We'd like to join the ADB." The representatives of the bank said, "That sounds like a perfectly reasonable proposition, if the Chinese are willing to put in the capital," and so forth. "The Chinese are Asians, and they need to develop. In this area everybody belongs to the Asian Development Bank." Then the Chinese representatives said, "However, first we want you to kick out the representatives of Taiwan (i.e., the Republic of China)."

This issue came to the State Department. The gut reaction of the Bureau of East Asian Affairs was that "We have to take care of the Chinese on this issue." The gut reaction of then Congressman Jack Kemp and his associates on Capitol Hill was that "If we connive with the Chinese to kick out the Taiwanese, there won't be another penny of money going into the Asian Development Bank from the United States." At that point I touched history, because I was able to go back to the Bureau of East Asian Affairs and to say, "Fellows,



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you can't do this. You don't really have a choice because we can't cut off the ADB. We're not going to destroy the Asian Development Bank. You cannot connive with the Chinese to get Taiwan 'kicked out' of the ADB. Go back and tell the Chinese to apply for membership. We will consider their membership application as we would anybody else's. Applicants do not get to say who shall be in the ADD, particularly before they're in the organization." In essence, I told the EA Bureau, "Go back and tell the Chinese to go to hell." So the East Asian Bureau, in effect, told the Chinese that. And the Chinese pouted for 12 to 18 months. Then the Chinese submitted an application to the ADD. They didn't say, "Let's kick out Taiwan." We took the application and processed it. And today China is a member of the ADD - and guess who is still in the ADD? Taiwan. However, the gut reaction from the priesthood in the Bureau of East Asian Affairs was that the Chinese had to be taken care of.

Another example, again with China, where I think that I touched history. In 1982 a Joint Communiqué was issued by the United States and China on the sale of arms to Taiwan.

*Q: This was an executive agreement.*

MONTGOMERY: This was an executive agreement, but it was developed in close cooperation with Congress. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee was fully involved in the process. Secretary of State Haig would regularly brief the members of the committee on this issue, and I was in charge of that connection. The drafting of the agreement got down to the point where we were haggling over a couple of words. One of my perennial problems in this whole business was that the Bureau of East Asian Affairs would try to say, in drafting this official communication, "If we can get the Chinese to agree to this communication, it will permit us to sell arms to Taiwan." I told them, "You do not go to the Congress of the United States and say that we are seeking Beijing's 'permission' to sell arms to Taiwan. You do not use that word. Cross it out of your word processing system!" And then the same formulation would pop up the following week - and I would have to slap it down again. Because you can never say that to Congress.

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*Q: It would have been the end to any possibility of reaching an agreement.*

MONTGOMERY: It would have been the end. It would have confirmed everybody's suspicions about the people conducting our East Asian policy. So we got down to the final point. I think that there was only one word left to negotiate. We finally worked it out and put it in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, not to get their permission, but to keep them informed.

*Q: To be sure that they were part of the consensus.*

MONTGOMERY: To be sure that they were part of the consensus. There was one word in the draft agreement that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee didn't like. The argument inside the State Department was, "Don't show it to the Foreign Relations Committee until it's all done and agreed to by the Chinese. Keep them informed, but at the final moment present them with a 'fait accompli.'" I argued, "No. I know that that's the traditional way of doing things. However, we're going to give it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at an early point. We're going to give it to them after it's all done, but before we agree with the Chinese, so that they can't say that anything was 'sprung' on them." So we gave the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the text of the agreement which we had negotiated with the Chinese. Senator Charles Percy, who was then the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said to me, "I don't like that word. I prefer it to be such and such." This is the point where you really see the difference between the Executive Branch and Congress, because the Executive Branch has to implement an agreement, and Congress really doesn't. I'm not passing any moral judgment on them. This is just the way it is.

*Q: It's a different approach.*

MONTGOMERY: It's a different approach. Congress is a different 'beast.' So we said to Senator Percy, "No. This is it. This is the way it's been negotiated. If we go back to

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the Chinese and say that we want to change this word, they're going to want to change another word, and then the whole negotiating process will start all over again. Now, we'll do that if you vote for a resolution asking us to do that." Well, they weren't going to do that. No way that they were going to do that.

*Q: It would mean sticking their neck out.*

MONTGOMERY: Oh, yes. And they realized that it wasn't their function. I brokered that word and that process. I drafted the statement to be made by John Holdridge, who was then the Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs. When we presented the statement in public, the next day, as a fait accompli, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it went through without a whimper. I remember what I think was the key sentence - one of those obvious things - was, "Why do we want good relations with China? Why do we try?" The answer was, "History has shown that when we don't have 'workable' relations with China, people get killed. The situation becomes extremely dangerous, and Americans die." That's what happened in Korea and that's what happened in Vietnam, in many ways.

I frankly think that that's what we're facing today. We are right on the edge of sliding down a spiral of recriminations and difficulties, if we don't properly manage things like the Chinese application for entry into the WTO (World Trade Organization).

The other really serious matter that I got involved with when I was in the Bureau of Congressional Relations was the peaceful nuclear cooperation agreement with the Chinese. This issue came up at the very end of my assignment in Congressional Relations. This was a moment in which I had more power than I ever had in my life. It lasted about four hours. [Laughter] And it worked!

The question was whether we would reach an agreement on peaceful nuclear cooperation with the Chinese.

*Q: You mean, an agreement on peaceful uses of nuclear energy.*

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MONTGOMERY: Yes, peaceful uses. We were certainly not going to exchange weapons technology with the Chinese, or anything like that. Needless to say, the nuclear energy industry in the United States was extremely desirous of seeing this agreement reached, because they had visions of cooking noodles in each Chinese family, using a small nuclear reactor. They thought, "We'll be rich!"

*Q: Rich beyond belief!*

MONTGOMERY: The Chinese had all kinds of reasons for wanting a peaceful uses of nuclear energy agreement with us, as the United States had with other countries. This was a sign that they were being accepted in the world, and so forth. This agreement was enormously difficult to negotiate because the Chinese were playing around with the Pakistanis. There's nothing new about this business you see in the press these days about China's supplying the Pakistanis with nuclear and rocket technology. There were lots of people in the United States Government who didn't want to see this agreement with China on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. There were incredible leaks to the newspapers at strategic moments in the negotiations. There were considerations involving Congress. A subcommittee was going to pass on certain language, and then there would be a leak about what the Chinese were doing with the Pakistanis. It was a real tough contact sport.

*Q: A lot of heavy lifting.*

MONTGOMERY: A lot of very heavy lifting. The language and the negotiations on the language got all wrapped up in a monster continuing resolution, literally covering the whole U.S. Government. This was a huge CR (Continuing Resolution). I don't think that any appropriations bills had been passed as of late December, 1986. Senator John Glenn (Democrat, Ohio) and, I think, a Congressman from the State of Washington, whose name I can't recall, were out to kill the peaceful uses of nuclear energy agreement with China. We can put the Congressman's name in later on. They didn't want the language to go into the CR which would allow us to conclude the agreement.

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The negotiations on language involving me, the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the non-proliferation people in the State Department went on for about six weeks. At issue was the fact that China wanted the ability to deal with us as a nuclear weapons state. Nuclear cooperation agreements with nuclear weapons states are different from nuclear cooperation agreements with non nuclear weapons states. "Lenient" isn't exactly the word, but...

*Q: You accept the fact that they know a lot about nuclear energy.*

MONTGOMERY: Yes. And Senator Glenn and the Congressman from Washington wanted to keep the Chinese in the more restrictive type of approach to nuclear cooperation. Of course, the Chinese were not going to accept this.

There was one particularly climactic scene at 3:00 AM up on the top floor of the Capitol. A conference was going on between representatives of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee and the Appropriations Subcommittee on the House and Senate sides. They were trying to reconcile the differing versions of the CR passed by the Senate and the House. Congressman Neil Smith from Iowa chaired the House of Representatives conferees and Senator Fritz Hollings (Democrat, South Carolina) chaired the Senate conferees. They were part of the general CR (Continuing Resolution) conference. They were in charge of the State Department authorization bill, which contained this language. I was hanging around outside this meeting, as lobbyists are wont to do. Somebody stuck his head out of the room and asked, "Anybody from the State Department here?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Come on in here." So I went in and conducted a 30 minute debate with Senator Glenn and Senator Cohen (Republican, Maine). During that debate I exercised the power that I had been given by OMB (Office of Management and Budget) that morning. This was to threaten a veto by President Reagan of the whole CR if we didn't get our way on the agreement on peaceful nuclear uses with China. Teeth were dropping all over the place. It was that serious.

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On the next day I was denounced on the floor of the Senate by Senator Glenn for threatening a veto by President Reagan. However, ultimately, we got our way. Of course there's been no practical result at all from this agreement on peaceful nuclear uses with China. Westinghouse hasn't sold anything to China.

We also found, after several months, when for some reason the language that we had negotiated had to be put into operation, that it contained internal contradictions that made it impossible to apply. You know, it was like a situation with A and B. If you did A, you couldn't do B. If you did B, you couldn't do A. But you were supposed to do both. [Laughter] It would have started one of those descending spirals with the Chinese if we hadn't pulled off this agreement on nuclear cooperation. I felt that I did something that counted, even though the agreement itself was internally inconsistent and never led anywhere, but for other reasons.

During a Foreign Service assignment you walk into a situation and somebody hands us a set of problems which they have been watching, massaging, and dealing with for two or three years. We do the same for two or three years. Then we hand on the same problems to our successors. We never really see any results. Well, one of the satisfactions in working in Congressional Relations is that you either get 51 votes in the Senate or 218 votes in the House, and the resolution or bill passes - or you don't. And you really can keep score in a way that you can't keep score on most work you do in the Foreign Service. In that sense working in Congressional Relations is really satisfying.

I used to say to Foreign Service people who would want to come and work in Congressional Relations, especially if they were Political Officers, "Okay. I see your file here. You're a good Political Officer and you're good on analysis. This is where you 'grow up.' This is where it gets 'real.' We expect you to make your observations and analysis - and then we expect you to go one step further. You're going to have to 'do something about it.' You're going to have to change the situation, one way or the other. You're going to have to promote a piece of legislation that you've observed and commented on so

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eloquently - or you're going to have to 'stop' a piece of legislation.” And I firmly believe that. The ultimate calling of a Political Officer was to work this relationship. And some of them could do it and some of them couldn't.

I generally had a pretty good bunch of people working for me who were good at what they were doing. I tended to give them considerable initiative and authority and would back them up when necessary. On any given day I probably had a dozen officers working for me on a variety of projects. One of my guys got the Genocide Convention ratified. I will always be very proud of that. This issue had been up for consideration by the Senate since 1948.

*Q: Who was this?*

MONTGOMERY: Tom Bleha. He did it with very little intervention from me. Another officer was Elizabeth (Wee Gee) Bowen. She kept our assistance to Pakistan going through several really rough passages, thereby keeping the resistance to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan going. If that had fallen apart, Lord knows where we'd be today. I think that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and their failure there, was extremely instrumental in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

*Q: I think that they were.*

MONTGOMERY: If that zany woman - Wee Gee was Elizabeth Bowen's nickname - had not succeeded, we could have had a very different world on our hands. Wee Gee also got the authorization for the National Endowment for Democracy through Congress and saw to it that it was funded. I think that working with the AFL/CIO was instrumental in keeping Solidarity alive in Poland, through very difficult days. These were serious issues.

*Q: You mentioned that the AFL/CIO was instrumental in keeping Solidarity going. You mean that the U.S. Government, through the AFL/CIO, kept Solidarity going?*

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MONTGOMERY: Yes.

*Q: I hadn't realized that. I thought that they used their own resources in support of Solidarity.*

MONTGOMERY: Well, they did use their own resources at first. In fact, they did both.

*Q: They were a channel for U.S. funds and they used their own money?*

MONTGOMERY: And the U.S. started to help them to support Solidarity after they had begun to do this with their own money. I'm convinced of this, though I don't know all of the details. I think that the U.S. clearly saw this program as an opportunity to carry on this project of helping Solidarity, although the U.S. Government did not start it.

*Q: The AFL/CIO put up their earnest money.*

MONTGOMERY: For sure. There was another point where, I felt, we got something serious done. One afternoon Dwight Mason and I literally kept the State Department from shutting its doors. The State Department authorization bill was going to run out, and nobody on Capitol Hill seemed to realize this. We passed the word to Secretary of State George Schultz and persuaded him to go up to Capitol Hill and keep the Department's doors open!

In Congressional Relations I spent an enormous amount of constructive time dealing with what we came to call, "The Great Korean Rice Crisis." Do you remember the Congressman from Louisiana, Otto Passman?

*Q: Yes.*

MONTGOMERY: Well, this was sort of a legacy of Otto's. Otto had left Congress - or did so while I was in Congressional Relations. Otto saw to it that, over the years, the Koreans bought an enormous amount of Louisiana rice, primarily under the PL (Public Law) 480 program. This was very important to Otto, and the Koreans bought a lot of rice. That rice



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was sold to them through a broker by the name of Grover Connell. In 1980 the Republic of Korea needed rice, as they often did. It was just before the point at which the Republic of Korea became self-sufficient in rice production.

*Q: It is now?*

MONTGOMERY: It is now. The Japanese happened to have a rice surplus in 1980, and they wanted to sell some rice to the Koreans. The U.S. rice growers in Louisiana, Arkansas, and California didn't want this to happen. We worked out a deal under which, if the Koreans bought the rice from Japan, they would agree to buy 280,000 tons of American rice in 1981. So this Japanese sale to Korea went forward. Just stop and think about what the situation was. The Koreans had to get permission from the U.S. to buy rice from the Japanese! In essence, the Japanese had to get permission from us to sell rice to the Koreans. This gives you a good idea of how all of this was tied together. So this deal went through.

What I inherited was a situation where the Koreans bought the Japanese rice, had eaten it, or had spread it on their rice fields. Now it was time for the Koreans to buy U.S. rice. Well, the Koreans said, "Okay, we'll buy the rice, but we aren't going to buy it from Grover Connell. We want to buy it from somebody else. We are in touch with the Comet Rice Company in California which will supply the rice." Well, by this time Grover Connell had sold every grain of rice from the U.S. which had ever been sold to Korea for the previous 30 years.

Thus began a year-long crisis. The Koreans said, "Hey, we'll buy the rice, but why are you telling us whom we can buy it from? We have a contract with the Comet Rice Company in California to supply the rice." The patrons (the bosses) of the American rice industry would come back and say, "Yes, but Comet Rice company doesn't own the rice. Grover Connell has the options on the rice." And the Koreans would say, "Well, we'll buy the rice

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from Comet. We're perfectly prepared to live up to our obligations. Maybe you should see to it that Comet gets the rice to sell to us."

*Q: Why didn't the Koreans want to buy the rice from Connell?*

MONTGOMERY: I never really quite figured that out. I think that they were just tired of dealing with that one person.

*Q: Was there an inside commission involved?*

MONTGOMERY: I don't know. They were just tired of dealing with him. Remember, the Republic of Korea was getting feistier.

*Q: And soon they had enough food to take care of themselves.*

MONTGOMERY: Yes. They were tired of the old arrangement. This happened just after a scandal became public about PL 480 rice which touched the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tip O'Neill. I think that the Koreans just wanted to move away from the old arrangements. In a way, it is almost irrelevant why they wanted to do this. They just wanted to do it.

So the matter was put into the hands of Ken Damm, who was Deputy Secretary of State under Secretary Schultz. In my view he was not up to handling the political requirements needed to solve this crisis. The people on the Hill (Congress) with whom we were dealing were then Representative John Breaux (Democrat, Louisiana), who is now Senator John Breaux, Representative William Alexander (Democrat, Arkansas), Representative John Fazio (Democrat, California), and Representative Thomas, a Republican whose first name I don't remember and who is still in Congress. They wanted the State Department and the U.S. Government to force the Koreans to buy the rice from Grover Connell. What we wanted Secretary Schultz or Deputy Secretary Ken Damm to say to the Members of Congress was, "The Koreans have told us that they're perfectly prepared to buy American

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rice. That settles it as far as we're concerned. We are not going to get involved in a dispute between various American vendors of the rice. As long as they are ready to buy the American rice, how they buy it is up to them." That's what I wanted the Seventh Floor (senior level of the State Department) to say. However, Ken Damm would not say that. He would not say that for a year.

So we just kept getting thumped by Congress and we'd keep making these approaches to the Koreans. The Koreans would say, "We're ready to buy the rice. We just reserve the right to decide whom we're going to buy it from."

*Q: What was Ken Damm's background?*

MONTGOMERY: He had been an IBM executive. So we went through this period of about a year with Members of Congress beating up on us to get the South Koreans to do what they wanted to do. They really thought that we had the power to force the Koreans to make this decision. They were very reluctant to accept the view that things had changed in the Koreans' own mind about how they had to deal with things like this.

It took about a year to resolve the matter. Secretary of State George Schultz was going up before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce. He was testifying in support of the State Department's appropriation. Representative Bill Alexander was going to be there, since he was a member of that Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. Deputy Secretary Ken Damm had been sent off some place else or absented himself from the proceedings. We got Secretary Schultz to go up before the Subcommittee and say, "Look, the Koreans have assured us that they will buy the rice from the United States. We are not going to get involved in a commercial dispute over whom they're going to buy the rice from." He went up and said that, and that took care of the problem.

Right about that same time the House Foreign Affairs Committee got involved. Just before Secretary Schultz said this, or right after he said it, Jack (Irish name), who was Chief of

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Staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee under Representative Clem Zablocki, said to me, "Look, you guys have got to get this Korean rice thing straightened out. You know, the Koreans have to be 'reasonable' about this. Maybe what you have to tell them is that if they have some Foreign Military Sales coming up, we might not be able to take care of them, unless they can take care of us on rice." I said, "Right, Jack. You do that, and we'll get somebody to get up on the floor of the House and say that you're perfectly prepared to put the lives of an American division at risk that is sharing the military risk with the South Koreans, over the question of who's going to sell rice to the South Koreans." Then he said, "I don't want to do that. Don't do that." I said, "Okay, but that's what we're talking about." He said, "You're right," and that was the end of it. So that ended the problem, but it took a year.

*Q: And it was Deputy Secretary Ken Damm who was the trouble.*

MONTGOMERY: Basically, it was Ken Damm who was the problem. But you can't say that to Members of Congress.

*Q: Why?*

MONTGOMERY: I don't know. There are people who believe that successful relations with Congress consist of only telling Members of Congress what they want to hear.

*Q: I don't know if you remember Skip White in the State Department in the old days.*

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

Q: That was his attitude, and I understand it. I think you said that the relationship between the State Department and Congress has totally changed since the days of Skip White for other reasons.

MONTGOMERY: An interesting little footnote to this whole exercise is that after Secretary Schultz said those things to the House Appropriations Subcommittee, the Korean rice

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problem went away. Then Congressman Bill Alexander called me up and said, "Jim, I'm going to be in the State Department later today. I'm having lunch with Secretary Schultz and I want to come by and see you." I thought, "Oh, shit, what's this about?" Well, Alexander came by to see me. He sat down and said, "Jim, I just want to tell you how much I appreciate the way you've handled this rice business. You've been 'straight' with us, you've told us everything, you've been totally honest, and now that the Secretary has done what you wanted him to do, we accept that. I want you to know that it's been a pleasure doing business with you, even though we've been on opposite sides of this issue."

*Q: That was a very kind comment.*

MONTGOMERY: I thought that it was one of the most handsome things that anybody has ever done to me. This was sort of indicative of the sociology of dealing with people on Capitol Hill. These guys are politicians, and human relations at their most basic are extremely important.

Q: They especially value honesty, and this is surprising, because it's sort of a schoolboy term. However, it's obviously very important. You see Senator Dole saying right now, "If I say I'll do something, everybody knows that that's what I'll do." This is very important to a lot of Congressmen.

MONTGOMERY: In the view of most Members of Congress, if you once deviate from that course, you're finished. It's different in the State Department. In the State Department, people tend not to say "Thank you" to other State Department people. Whereas on Capitol Hill, members of Congress say, "Thank you" all the time. You know, this simple thing gets you a long way. You do something, and somebody calls you up and says, "Thank you." Well, you're going to do something else for that guy.

Q: In the "Analects" of Confucius, he says, "Be generous with praise. It costs very little." But it's quite true. In the State Department we have these "Meritorious Honor Awards" and

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"Superior Honor Awards." There are only about two or three of them handed out per year! There should be a lot of them. Why not?

MONTGOMERY: They're cheap! But this was an interesting little contrast. I think that the memory that I really came away from Congressional Relations with was how ill-equipped we are to deal with Congress, because of the various characteristics of the State Department mentality. This became apparent because of this crash course I had in Congressional Relations in the comparative organization of politics. You began to see why the State Department gets its clock cleaned all the time in the great bureaucratic struggle that goes on. Because the State Department basically doesn't believe that there should be a bureaucratic struggle. Equipping yourself to deal with the bureaucratic struggle is to admit that it exists. And most Foreign Service Officers aren't going to do that. So, consequently, they get taken to the cleaners all the time. Other people eat the State Department's lunch on a regular basis, because State Department people don't want to admit that their lunch is vulnerable.

At one point I was working on a little committee at FSI (Foreign Service Institute) on what should be taught in the A-100 course (introductory course for new Foreign Service Officers) or in the Mid-Career Course. I came up with the conclusion that the course could be almost completely unstructured. What the FSI should teach people is how to write fast and clear; how to get up on your feet and speak clearly and articulately and with some logic in presentation; and how to debate - actually, how to debate. Those are the skills that you need in this bureaucratic struggle if your bureaucracy is going to prevail. That's what it's really all about, when you stop and think about it. Even if you have the best idea in the world about how a certain policy should be pursued, if you don't know how to present it, if you don't know how to talk about it, and if you don't understand how it fits in with the rest of the community in the Washington area, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter how good the idea is.

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I think that one of the examples of this is the Department's attitude toward television. Here's the State Department, one of the players in the great foreign policy game. Starting around 1977-1978, the State Department allowed TV cameras into the Daily News Briefing. In other words, the major and minor television networks have somebody there every day with a camera pointed at the State Department spokesperson. This is the only Department in the U.S. Government which briefs the media on a daily basis - except the White House, of course. Therefore, the State Department is the only department in the government which has access to the entire nation on a daily basis. And they don't have a clue as to how to use that opportunity, to make sure that the Department wins the bureaucratic fights inside the U.S. Government. They don't even think in those terms! They would be appalled to think in those terms!

Q: I remember working up guidance for the State Department spokesperson. Most of the time the spokesperson is regarded as a great inconvenience. People thought, "What do we have to do to get rid of this fool!" And sometimes we had some very good and very clever people as spokespersons. This was not always the case, but sometimes we did.

MONTGOMERY: We should be thinking, "How can I use this spokesperson to help my Department beat the Central Intelligence Agency or the Department of Commerce on this or that question, or something like that?" And there it is, handed to the State Department every day on a silver platter! And they generally don't use it!

Q: It's funny about this, Jim, although I don't want to carry this too far. This is your interview. However, somehow I think that this is a problem which is inherent in diplomatic services, because in the British and the French diplomatic services they have the same problem. They have the same access to the media, but they don't like the idea of sharing authority with anybody else. And the British and French diplomatic services and the State Department lose more often than not!

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MONTGOMERY: Well, that's the State Department, as you know and I know. This attitude gets played out in miniature in individual situations overseas, where the Ambassador does not use what he or she has and ends up being run over by other U.S. Government agencies. If you're appointed Secretary of State, that doesn't mean that you get to run foreign policy. All that it means is that you get a hunting license to see if you can run foreign policy. Your hunting license may have more authority and more oomph behind it than the license of the Secretary of Commerce, but not necessarily - particularly on individual questions. Who ran foreign policy toward China, to the extent that it was run at all, during the first Clinton administration? It was the U.S. Trade Representative - that's who ran China policy. Did Secretary of State Warren Christopher have any credibility with the Chinese? Give me a break! So it's by no means a foregone conclusion that the Secretary of State will run foreign policy.

The State Department does not like to accept the fact - and this is a fact - that this is what happens. That's why you see, periodically, that another foundation is funding yet another study on how the United States should reorganize to conduct foreign policy. Basically, the idea behind most of these studies is, "How should we organize the U.S. Government so that we can 'trick' all of these bureaucracies into accepting the authority of the State Department." [Laughter]

Q: Well, this was a fascinating experience you had in H (Congressional Relations). You were one of the few Foreign Service Officers who had this opportunity. I'm not sure that many Foreign Service Officers really appreciate what the opportunities are.

MONTGOMERY: It was interesting. One doesn't like to pat oneself on the back, but I was told by a number of officers that the reason the number of people applying to work in H increased dramatically while I was there was that people wanted to come and work for me - because everybody had such a good time! [Laughter]

Q: *Let's see, now, when did you leave H?*



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MONTGOMERY: I left H in January or February, 1986.

*Q: What happened then?*

MONTGOMERY: I went to become senior Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Human Rights.

*Q: How did you choose this, or how were you selected for this job?*

MONTGOMERY: Dick Schifter, who was then Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, sought me out - why, I'm not sure. I think that he heard about me or heard someone talking about me and made me the offer. So I went to work for him.

It was not my most satisfying assignment, for a number of reasons. One reason was the classic problem between functional and geographic bureaus. I had been in a functional bureau which had a lot of clout (H), because we had the reality of the Congress behind us. We were able to use that position to drive things. As you know, you could drive decisions, like the one on the ADB (Asian Development Bank), which I mentioned previously.

However, the clout of the Bureau of Human Rights Affairs was by no means in that category. On any given day most of the geographic bureaus in the Department looked at the Bureau of Human Rights as an inconvenience. They feared that it would interfere in what they regarded as their business.

*Q: Or make an unfortunate remark.*

MONTGOMERY: Yes, make an unfortunate remark and embarrass some well meaning dictator, or something like that - some gross violator of human rights. Some disgusting slob someplace would be upset - and we needed him for some particular question.

Operationally, there wasn't an awful lot to be done. There weren't things to do or laws to pass. The Bureau of Human Rights was created by Congress out of enormous frustration.

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It's the last resort of Congress - to force the State Department to create a bureau. When Congress finds a particular issue that it considers that the State Department isn't paying sufficient attention to, it orders the establishment of a bureau. I think that it was [reacting to] Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's studied contempt for human rights, although he now seems to have changed his mind on the importance of human rights as a worthy subject of attention, judging from his latest book. At the time he had studied contempt for human rights as a serious subject. Maybe it wasn't studied. Maybe he came automatically to the idea that you should not allow human rights to interfere with his Metternichian view of the world in connection with the conduct of foreign policy. He got this attitude of studied contempt across with utter clarity to members of Congress.

So in total frustration, because of Kissinger's utter unwillingness to accommodate their concern about human rights, they created a bureau and shoved it down the State Department's throat. I went through a situation similar to this over the creation of a small bureau for telecommunications policy. I was in Congressional Relations at the time. Representative Dante Fascell, who is a perfectly reasonable person, felt that the State Department wasn't paying enough attention to telecommunications policy. The Department of Commerce was eating the lunch of the State Department. I'd like to go back into my time in Congressional Relations for another constructive story to illustrate how things really work. It concerns the time I got caught between two Committee Chairmen in the House of Representatives - between Representative Dante Fascell, who was of obvious importance to the Department, and Representative John Dingle, who was Chairman of the House Commerce Committee. It concerned the State Department's unwillingness to pay attention to the whole issue of telecommunications and, basically, in the information age, the movement of electrons across national borders for profit. This raised a number of issues between the U.S. and other nations. It had to be addressed and put in the context of our overall foreign relations. It could not be handled by some parochial bureau, like the Department of Commerce, to give you Representative Dante Fascell's attitude on this.

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Secretary George Schultz basically did not pay attention to this matter. So Fascell became enormously frustrated and really went over the edge when Representative Dingle and the Secretary of Commerce tried to do a move on him, with the connivance of the Office of Management and Budget. I was able to work with Representative Fascell's people to thwart this. It involved, however, George Schultz getting a letter of reprimand from the Office of Management and Budget! I think he survived, and people still tease me about it.

The State Department sent up its budget proposal for the year. The State Department proposed - it didn't even raise the issue, but the idea was that the State Department would continue to conduct and run its own telecommunications system. That is, the diplomatic communications system. Well, Representative John Dingle, working with the Department of Commerce, introduced an amendment to the State Department appropriations bill which provided for transferring control of the diplomatic communications system from the Department of State to the Department of Commerce! The idea was that the House Foreign Affairs Committee would fight this. To do this, the House Foreign Affairs Committee would ask OMB (Office of Management and Budget), as is done with all pieces of legislation, to come up with the administration position on this proposed piece of legislation, this proposed amendment.

The way this process works is that OMB circulates the proposed amendment throughout the various concerned departments in the administration. OMB would then come up with a proposed position and would try to get all of the departments concerned to clear it. The trick here was that the OMB would circulate this amendment. The State Department would say that this should not be done and that that should be the administration position. The Department of Commerce would then decline to clear this position. The idea then would be that, when the issue came to the floor of the House of Representatives, and Representative Dante Fascell rose to object to the proposed amendment, Representative Dingle would say, "Well, what does the administration say?" Then Fascell would be in the position of having to say, "The administration doesn't have a position." Then Dingle would

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say, "Well, if they aren't worried about it, why should you be more worried about it than they are, Mr. Fascell?" So there it was.

Fascell's people called me and said, "Fascell is climbing the walls about this. You guys in the State Department have finally 'blown it.' The House of Representatives is going to take away your telecommunications function and give it to the Department of Commerce - and we don't have anything from the State Department." So I checked back with OMB, and the situation was precisely as I described it. The Department of Commerce proposed taking over the diplomatic communications system, and there was no administration position on this proposal. I said, "I'll take care of it."

So I laid this all out. I sent a memo to Secretary Schultz. I said, "You need to sign this letter to Representative Fascell." In the letter I proposed that Schultz should say, "The administration's position, at the time of our original legislation, was that the diplomatic telecommunications function should remain with the Department of State. Had it been otherwise, we would have included that in our position. We did not. That, therefore, is the administration position." I got Secretary Schultz to sign that and sent it up to Representative Fascell.

So Representative Dingle rose to his feet and said, "What's the administration position." Representative Fascell had been sitting on this letter from Secretary Schultz, and Representative Dingle didn't know that he had it. So Fascell rose to his feet and read the letter from Secretary Schultz. And Representative Dingle was undone publicly, on the floor of the House of Representatives! However, the Department of Commerce and Representative Dingle were so annoyed that they had been flummoxed in this fashion that they went back and complained to the Office of Management and Budget. Under pressure from Representative Dingle, the OMB was forced to send Secretary Schultz a letter of reprimand for having come up with what he said was an administration position which hadn't been properly cleared by the Department of Commerce!

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People talk about the Iron Triangle of the government bureaucracy, the Congressional committees, and industry. Well, the telecommunications industry wasn't particularly concerned about this issue. Certainly, one of the House committees and part of the bureaucracy were playing a very nasty game. This is a perfect example of how the State Department wasn't protecting its own interests. So Representative Fascell introduced legislation creating the Bureau of Telecommunications in the Department of State - to make sure that there was at least somebody inside the Department of State, 40 hours a week, who would run with the ball when telecommunications questions came up.

*Q: I thought that State Department telecommunications were, in fact, run by CIA.*

MONTGOMERY: No. This situation has changed.

*Q: Were State telecommunications at one time run by the CIA?*

MONTGOMERY: They were, but this was changed.

*Q: When did that happen?*

MONTGOMERY: Not too long before this little battle that I was telling you about.

*Q: When did this battle between Representatives Fascell and Dingl happen?*

MONTGOMERY: This was about 1985. This is what Congress does when it doesn't feel that the Department is paying attention. It forces the creation of an entity inside the Department of State where there will at least be somebody that Congress can call up and force to do things, and so forth. The creation of the Bureau of Human Rights was another case in point.

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President Jimmy Carter did not invent the Bureau of Human Rights. However, Jimmy Carter decided to take advantage of it. He appointed Patricia Derian to run the Bureau of Human Rights.

*Q: Wasn't the Bureau of Human Rights created during the Carter administration?*

MONTGOMERY: No. Congress required its creation during the Ford administration (between 1974 and 1977), as a reaction to Secretary Henry Kissinger's attitude of studied contempt regarding human rights. During the Ford administration Congress also mandated the publication of the annual Human Rights Reports. I remember that I was working as a Special Assistant to Helmut Sonnenfeldt when the requirement for the first human rights report came up. We tried to fob it off by covering the situation throughout the world in about three pages. [Laughter] Congress didn't buy that. They then came up with mandating a modified human rights report, listing what had to be included, and so forth. The administration wasn't responding to what Congress wanted, so Congress passed a law.

*Q: I remember the way that Secretary Kissinger tried to fob this issue off. He said, more or less in these words, "A society like the United States can never be indifferent to human rights in the world, but this cannot be our primary interest in the world." And he was right about that.*

MONTGOMERY: Of course, but that wasn't enough. A key majority in Congress suspected that, once Kissinger removed the issue of human rights from number one position, he wouldn't make it number two or any visible number. Maybe something like 1,586 would be the right number for him!

I'm simplifying this greatly, but there's some truth to what I'm saying. What Pat Derian did was to emphasize human rights concerns as they affected our Right Wing buddies in the world, that is, the Chileans, Argentinians, and people like that.

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*Q: And the Thai.*

MONTGOMERY: She didn't really beat up on the Thai all that much, although I was not directly involved. The Thai went through some rough patches there and have since gone through some rough patches.

Then the Reagan Republicans ran the 1980 election campaign, essentially ridiculing Jimmy Carter and the issue of human rights. President Reagan appointed to be Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, replacing Pat Derian, a man named Ernest Lefever, who was one of those who ridiculed the proposition that human rights should have a major role in foreign affairs. And the Senate did not confirm him, primarily because of his attitude. At that point Elliot Abrams stepped forward and volunteered to be Assistant Secretary for Human Rights. As a true supporter of President Reagan, he brought a degree of legitimacy to the proposition that human rights were significant. His attitude was that we should use the human rights issue to beat up on the Soviets, who were certainly as bad on this issue as any of our Right Wing friends. But to be credible, we also had to continue to beat up on our Right Wing friends. This view really legitimized the human rights function. It had the blessing of Carter supporters on the Left and Reagan supporters on the Right.

At the time I went to work for him in the Bureau of Human Rights Affairs in about 1986, Assistant Secretary Dick Schifter was determined to pursue that evenhanded human rights policy. This position also took very seriously the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) Helsinki agreement that President Gerry Ford signed. Actually, this evenhanded approach to the subject of human rights had started before Schifter became Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and even before Elliot Abrams showed up.

One of the elements in the CSCE Helsinki agreement was something called Basket Three. Basket One concerned security issues, Basket Two concerned economic issues, and Basket Three concerned human rights. The Soviets signed this as they had signed other agreements. They had no intention whatsoever of ever allowing it to inconvenience them.

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The United States, as a matter of policy, took advantage of this situation and began to use it as a pressure point on the Soviet Union. As the provisions of the Helsinki Agreement began to generate organizations and groups in the various Soviet republics which supported the Helsinki agreement, it became an important transmission belt which, I think, went far toward undermining the subjective legitimacy of the communist enterprise. I think that it was one of the things which led people like Mikhail Gorbachev to conclude that their rationale had long since dribbled away.

I think that the decision to make human rights a formal part of our diplomatic efforts materially contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

*Q: I think that that's a very interesting point.*

MONTGOMERY: I genuinely believe this. I believe that the decision on the part of people like Dick Schifter and Elliot Abrams (both former Assistant Secretaries of State for Human Rights Affairs) to keep this effort evenhanded was a key element in the success of the human rights policy.

When I was in the Human Rights Bureau, I visited South Africa. I called on the American desk officer at the South African Foreign Ministry. He asked, "Why does the United States single out countries like South Africa to criticize its human rights policy? Why don't you criticize other countries?" I was able to hand him the two-inch thick annual report on human rights practices around the world and demonstrate to him that this report was not critical only of South Africa. I said, "Read what we say about the Soviet Union and what we say about China in there."

Indeed, by the time I got there, and I did not cause this to happen, that annual report was well respected by the human rights community. It was not regarded as a document reflecting special pleading but was a very effective publication. It is regarded as a point of departure for anybody interested in human rights. It is invaluable.



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One of the interesting things was that in the Bureau of Human Rights one of the principal activities that we had to go through was basically to fight off the geographic bureaus and the pertinent American Embassies in difficult countries, who essentially wanted to whitewash the human rights practices of their clients.

Mexico was a case in point. Think of what's happened in Mexico since the mid-1980s. It boggles the mind. We had our biggest problems in the State Department with the Mexican and the Israeli desks.

Q: You mentioned clients. I think that it is a widespread practice in the State Department to refer to the countries you are concerned with as your clients.

MONTGOMERY: It's almost inevitable.

Q: *But they're not our clients.*

MONTGOMERY: I know they aren't.

Q: Our client is the United States and its interests. It is iniquitous that we ever allow ourselves or that anybody sits still when somebody refers to clients. They aren't our clients.

MONTGOMERY: Well, often the term is used in a pejorative sense, as it should be.

Q: *I guess so.*

MONTGOMERY: But it's both pejorative and accurate, because people in the State Department do develop clientitis. People do begin to think that their job is to represent Israel or Thailand or Mexico to the United States, rather than the other way around. There are no two ways about that.

Q: *How long were you in the Bureau of Human Rights?*

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MONTGOMERY: I was there from February, 1986, to July, 1987. It was here - actually it started when I was in Congressional Relations - that my name went forward to the committee for assignment as Ambassador to a couple of countries. I never got past the screening in the State Department and was not included in the list sent over to the White House.

I remember one day that I was being considered as Ambassador to two countries and I got turned down for both of them. I went through what a Spanish mystic poet once called, "La noche oscura del alma" - "the dark night of the soul." For about 24 hours I went through, in my mind, all the things that you and I have discussed. When they join the Foreign Service, many, if not most Foreign Service Officers regard eventually being an ambassador as a natural objective. Now I was reviewing my prospects. It was an interesting process. I was bitterly disappointed and cast down. Then, after 24 hours - and I don't know where it came from - a little voice said two things to me, "This probably means that you're never going to be an Ambassador." I swallowed that. Then the voice said, "Now that you've swallowed that, you don't have to worry about it any more, do you?" It was one of the most liberating moments of my life.

*Q: When did this happen?*

MONTGOMERY: This happened in early 1987. Then the post of Consul General in Johannesburg was about to come open. This was certainly a substantial job.

*Q: You applied for it.*

MONTGOMERY: I applied for it. I called up people in the Bureau of African Affairs. I had visited Johannesburg in 1986 and said that I'd like to be considered for this position. And it was all arranged very quickly.

When I was in Johannesburg, I felt that I maintained the position of the Human Rights Report, unsullied by clientitis. I felt that that was important. I certainly was able to maintain

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the position that, if a country is going to deal with the United States, this is part of it. The American people demand it. Other countries may not like it, but there it is and it has to be dealt with.

I understand the view of my friends in the various bureaus who were annoyed when human rights questions would be brought out. There was always something that, to them, seemed more important - and in many cases it was.

*Q: How far is Johannesburg from Pretoria, the national capital?*

MONTGOMERY: About 35 miles.

*Q: I think that you told me this once before, but did you regularly attend the Ambassador's staff meetings?*

MONTGOMERY: Yes. I was usually in Pretoria at least once a week.

*Q: Was this an awkward relationship, being so close to the Embassy?*

MONTGOMERY: No, and for several reasons. I didn't find this relationship at all difficult to handle. In fact, for six months of the year the Embassy wasn't close to Johannesburg. It was down in Capetown (about 800 miles southwest of Johannesburg). The Embassy was literally in Capetown. When the Embassy was in Capetown, our post in Pretoria did not have any pretensions of being the Embassy. It was reduced to a rump operation. Furthermore, Pretoria was a planned city - much like Canberra, and there wasn't much going on there but government. So when the government moved to Capetown, the government moved, and Pretoria was just a little outpost.

If you were interested in black politics, you didn't do much of that in Pretoria. That was a Johannesburg or a Capetown function. All of the black political organizations were centered in Johannesburg.

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*Q: You mean South African black organizations.*

MONTGOMERY: South African black organizations. This was the period of constructive engagement, a term coined by Chester Crockett, the Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs. This was a term which I found highly unfortunate. However, I note that the Clinton administration has decided, at least for a while, to apply it to our relationship with China. I thought that the history of this phrase should have kept them from doing that.

South Africa was actually a zany, incredible place. I was there at the period when the South Africans found it fashionable to condemn apartheid but felt that this was enough and that they could continue to enjoy all of its benefits. Looking back on this period, it was clearly the time when the South Africans were beginning to consider alternatives to apartheid. Giving the blacks practical elbow room was increasing. The blacks in South Africa had enormous purchasing power.

There was a very lively arts scene, especially the theater and “applefougart.” I saw the first production of “Serafina” in Johannesburg. It was absolutely fantastic. It was produced in a run-down little theater in the market area. I gave a reception for the cast before they went off to the United States, fame, and fortune. I was struck by the incredible good will of the black community, which has since been borne out.

*Q: For the U.S.?*

MONTGOMERY: For the South African whites! The tolerance they had, the willingness to put apartheid behind them. And of course this was the case with Nelson Mandela.

*Q: After 25 years in prison.*

MONTGOMERY: After 25 years in prison. And the thing that I find just absolutely incredible about Mandela is that, when he went into prison in the 1960s, it was the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) that “shopped him” (sold him out) to the South African police.

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*Q: When was he released? MONTGOMERY: I think that it was in 1990.*

*Q: How long were you in Johannesburg?*

MONTGOMERY: Two and one-half months. This is a Foreign Service story which happens all too often. I was there, sitting in my office, having been there for about three weeks, when the phone rang. It was a call from the Director General of the Foreign Service, George Vest. He called to inform me, with regret, that the promotion panel had met and had declined to give me a Limited Career Extension (LCE). Therefore, I was expected to leave the Foreign Service within a year. I could get a year's extension, at the pleasure of the Secretary of State. However, a grateful Republic was no longer going to require my services.

My response was, in the words of the little nun in the Sistine Chapel, after a fictional conversation with Michelangelo, "Oh, shit!" I had just arrived in Johannesburg. The Department had seen fit to assign me to this place.

*Q: I remember when you were just about to go there. I didn't understand fully at the time what was involved because I was already retired from the Foreign Service and no longer living in Washington.*

MONTGOMERY: I had left my wife Deedee back in Washington, DC.

*Q: When did you arrive in Johannesburg?*

MONTGOMERY: July 5, 1987, and I left on September 4, 1987. Now, there is a little more to it than that. I had left Deedee back here to do two things: get the house ready to rent. Our son Darrow was about to be married, and there were various arrangements to be made.

*Q: You were living in your present house then.*

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MONTGOMERY: We were living here. Darrow was getting married. So I was going to come back to Washington from Johannesburg, pick up Deedee, rent out the house, and move to Johannesburg. So we hadn't totally committed ourselves to Johannesburg, at that point. After I received this phone call from George Vest, I called up Deedee, told her what had happened, and said, "Take the house off the market. I'm coming back to Washington in September." Then I had time to relax, sort of got over the shock, and began to think about it. I thought, "You know, I'm going to check this thing out." So I called AFSA, the American Foreign Service Association. I told them what happened and asked them to go and get my personnel file and see what was going on. They called me back the next day and said, "Look, we've checked your file. There was a notice in there from an earlier Promotion Panel that one of your Efficiency Reports had arrived late. So they extended you for a year in grade. They did not record that in the appropriate place for the Promotion Panel that met this year. You weren't even to be considered for a Limited Career Extension this year. This is all bullshit." And it was.

*Q: Do you think that it was deliberate?*

MONTGOMERY: Just carelessness. Clerical carelessness, which is rampant in Washington. By this point I had been in the Foreign Service for 30 years. Deedee and I had thought long and hard about whether we would go to Johannesburg. I had sat down, worked out what my pension would be, and added in Deedee's salary at Congressional Information Service, a private research organization, where she is still working. We worked this out and concluded that continuing in the Foreign Service would financially be, at best, a wash, compared to retiring from the Foreign Service.

Ultimately, we decided that, basically, it would be an adventure to go to Johannesburg. It was certainly an interesting place. The problems there were for real. Johannesburg was a senior assignment - bigger, probably, than 80 percent of our Embassies.

*Q: Did Deedee go there at all?*

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MONTGOMERY: She never went there. Going to Johannesburg was something that we wanted to do. But then, after this phone call from George Vest, we began to reconsider the whole idea of staying on in the Foreign Service. I thought, "Okay, I can let it ride. Next year we'll go through the same thing. Next year, 1988, the Promotion Panel is going to meet and my LCE (Limited Career Extension) will be on the table. Who knows? Maybe they'll come to the same conclusion. Where will I have gotten meanwhile? I'll have to do something else before I finally retire, and maybe I'd better get started now."

Anyway, I came back to Washington in September, 1987. I told only a couple of people on my staff at the Consulate General in Johannesburg what the situation was, because I didn't know what I was going to do.

In the Department I went up to talk to people in the Director General's office and laid it all out. They said, "Well, there it is. This is fine." I said, "Yes, but I feel that I really need some relief after this kind of treatment. I've been mistreated, due to carelessness on your part. I really feel that I should at least have confidence that I can finish a two or three year tour of duty in Johannesburg. I want my LCE date extended to cover that. Then I can be considered for other things, too." They said, "Well, that's reasonable. However, we have no legal authority to do that. The only way that we can do that is if you submit a 'grievance case,' complaining about the way that you've been treated. Before it goes to the Grievance Board, we will offer you an assignment. That's the way we'll take care of it."

So, in one of the biggest mistakes of my life, I believed them and submitted a grievance case. Here I was, sort of marking time. Darrow was married, and I thought that I could go back to my post. They said, "Oh, we'll take care of this in a week - two weeks, at the outside." I submitted my grievance case and, all of a sudden, I became the supplicant, rather than the one who had the arm on them, because they made a mistake. Then I didn't hear anything from them. A week, two weeks, three weeks went by, and nothing happened. I was painting the house, and all that kind of stuff. I called them up and asked what was going on. They said, "Oh, you know, we have a lot of grievance cases, and

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yours is down there at the bottom of the pile. You'll have to wait for everybody else." I said, "Wait a minute. How long?" They said, "We're just the Grievance Staff. We don't know how long. The Director General may have told you," and so forth. I went to the Director General's office and said, "You guys have screwed me! I've got to get back to my post." They said, "Well, okay," and they made me an offer. I had asked for two years. They offered to give me a year's extension. That was just about the last bit of cheese paring that I could swallow.

So I went back and said to George Vest, "I'm leaving. I'm retiring." I had meanwhile wangled a sinecure at the FSI (Foreign Service Institute), giving training lectures there.

*Q: Did Vest even show embarrassment?*

MONTGOMERY: He was relieved. His role in life, at this stage of the game, was to get senior officers out of the Foreign Service. Now, the fact was that my curves - my age, my vitality, and my experience - were reaching that maximum point, where one or the other was going to begin to decline. I was, what, 53 years old and at the height of my vigor, knowledge, and so forth. And they were delighted to see me walk out the door!

So I went over to the FSI and began thinking about what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. Then I got a phone call from the Seagram Company, offering me a job at quite a handsome salary. So I left the State Department.

*Q: Were you in touch with Seagram's, or did this come out of the blue?*

MONTGOMERY: You may recall my time as Special Assistant to Helmut Sonnenfeldt when I had some dealings with the people at Seagram's. I had kept in touch with them since then. They wanted somebody to provide some international service programs and advice to the Chairman of the Board. I went up to New York and had lunch with him. They made me an offer that was too good to refuse.



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So I walked out of the State Department on a Friday in September, 1988, and started in at Seagram's. Thus ended a 30 year career in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, I must say that I've had the privilege of knowing you for most of this time, and it has been a source of very considerable enjoyment and pleasure to me. I have the very highest regard for you, Jim. I'm very sorry that you were treated in this way, right at the end. You know, the poor State Department! It can't handle its own affairs very well. They do this to all kinds of people. I've met senior Ambassadors who have had two or three Embassies. They're often sore. They say, "I could have handled another good Ambassadorial Mission and could have done a fine job." And, probably, this is true.

Ours is a very wealthy country, both in terms of money and human resources. We waste so much of both of them.

MONTGOMERY: I could have hung on with the grievance case, gone to the Grievance Board, and all of that. But I was just unwilling to do it. I was just unwilling to end my career in this kind of contest. I walked away from the assignment to Johannesburg in October, 1987. The Seagram job offer did not take effect until June, 1988. In between, I was at the FSI. I had talked myself into Howard University Law School with the idea of becoming a lawyer. They were very nice to me over there. I had done an active cycle, and all of that stuff. I had taken the LSAT (Law School entry exam), so I had that out of the way.

But the Seagram offer was too good to turn down. It was a wonderful decision. I've made a lot of money from it. It substantially changed our lives and our prospects for our retirement. We were able to do a number of things. I call this section of the house in which we are sitting the Joseph C. Seagram Memorial addition to the house. [Laughter] I don't want to appear like Pangloss, but I did find and enjoy another world.

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Q: That's marvelous. You're still very active in a number of areas, and I'm very glad to have had this chance to interview you in connection with the Foreign Service Oral History program. Your contribution is a real addition to it.

MONTGOMERY: Thank you.

End of interview